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MIGRANT THREAT PERCEPTION, AND
CONFLICT IN HOST COMMUNITIES**

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Monterey, CA; Naval Postgraduate School

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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**INSULT TO INJURY: DISASTER DISPLACEMENT,
MIGRANT THREAT PERCEPTION, AND CONFLICT IN
HOST COMMUNITIES**

by

Michael S. Locke

March 2020

Co-Advisors:

John W. Rollins (contractor)
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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE March 2020		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE INSULT TO INJURY: DISASTER DISPLACEMENT, MIGRANT THREAT PERCEPTION, AND CONFLICT IN HOST COMMUNITIES			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Michael S. Locke				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) <p>Environmental disasters are complex problems not only for the communities directly hit but also for areas that receive the people forced out of their homes. In developing nations, this situation is called internal displacement and is recognized internationally as a protection and security problem similar to refugee flows. Wealthier countries like the United States, however, have not yet acknowledged similar concerns domestically. This thesis explores the right to freedom of movement, the potential for conflict and weakened social cohesion in post-disaster settings, and the ways American communities can identify these challenges and avoid perceiving fellow citizens as threats to stability.</p> <p>Through the examination of three historical case studies—Dust Bowl migrants, Hurricane Katrina evacuees, and victims of recent wildfires in California—this research explores sociological processes leading to outgroup definition, resource competition, and attempts to scapegoat displaced people. The synthesis of these experiences concludes with a new disaster-displacement model identifying factors and circumstances that amplify or mitigate threat perception by host communities and the vulnerability of migrant citizens. A central concern appears to be how newcomers exacerbate existing local problems and fit into familiar narrative frames; one forward-looking tool is the development of a U.S. policy on internally displaced persons.</p>				
14. SUBJECT TERMS social identity, conflict, adaptation, internal displacement, migration, refugees, resettlement, social welfare, community, perception, citizenship, freedom of movement, competition, public safety, moral panic, protection, security, outgroups, planning, housing, homelessness, climate, environment, disaster, wildfire, hurricane, drought, vulnerability, mitigation, United States			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 139	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

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**INSULT TO INJURY: DISASTER DISPLACEMENT, MIGRANT THREAT
PERCEPTION, AND CONFLICT IN HOST COMMUNITIES**

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**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(HOMELAND SECURITY AND DEFENSE)**

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ABSTRACT

Environmental disasters are complex problems not only for the communities directly hit but also for areas that receive the people forced out of their homes. In developing nations, this situation is called internal displacement and is recognized internationally as a protection and security problem similar to refugee flows. Wealthier countries like the United States, however, have not yet acknowledged similar concerns domestically. This thesis explores the right to freedom of movement, the potential for conflict and weakened social cohesion in post-disaster settings, and the ways American communities can identify these challenges and avoid perceiving fellow citizens as threats to stability.

Through the examination of three historical case studies—Dust Bowl migrants, Hurricane Katrina evacuees, and victims of recent wildfires in California—this research explores sociological processes leading to outgroup definition, resource competition, and attempts to scapegoat displaced people. The synthesis of these experiences concludes with a new disaster-displacement model identifying factors and circumstances that amplify or mitigate threat perception by host communities and the vulnerability of migrant citizens. A central concern appears to be how newcomers exacerbate existing local problems and fit into familiar narrative frames; one forward-looking tool is the development of a U.S. policy on internally displaced persons.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Cal Fire	California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection
CCA	California Citizens Association
CSU	California State University
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FSA	Farm Security Administration
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
IDP	internally displaced person
LNU	Cal Fire's Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit
NIMBY	not in my backyard
NOAA	National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration
NRC	National Research Council
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
ORR	Office of Refugee Resettlement
PG&E	Pacific Gas & Electric Company
POE	port of entry
RA	Resettlement Administration
SES	socioeconomic status
SIT	social identity theory
SLR	sea-level rise
SOP	standard operating procedure
UIT	uncertainty-identity theory
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USPS	U.S. Postal Service
WUI	wildland-urban interface

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Environmental disasters are a concern of homeland security largely in terms of the planning, mitigation, and resilience aspects for the communities directly hit. A more complex problem is the longer-term disruption to the lives of people who are unable to remain in their home communities and relocate elsewhere in the country, and particularly the frictions that occur with the residents of the “receiving communities” where they resettle. This phenomenon is recognized by the U.S. government and international organizations as internal displacement, although the term *internally displaced persons* (IDPs) has traditionally only been applied to the status of large groups in less-developed countries. Unlike refugee crises, which trigger the protections of international law, IDP flows present a different challenge, as they remain the responsibility of their home country.

Displacement has been occurring with increasing frequency both in the United States and around the world, due both to the effects of climate change on weather patterns and to the ongoing propensity of people to settle more densely in disaster-prone areas. American communities are not immune from the risks of poorly managed displacement, including violent conflict, increases in poverty, a weakened social contract and trust in institutions, and an erosion of the citizen’s right to internal freedom of movement; indeed, all these markers are documented in previous domestic migrations. States and cities have enacted policies barring the entry of indigent people or disenfranchising recent arrivals; communities have isolated evacuees through housing and employment discrimination; at times, violent conflict has erupted between locals and newcomers. This thesis seeks to help mitigate these risks by presenting a more holistic understanding of the secondary effects of disasters on the displaced and the communities that receive them.

Three elements of this dynamic are key to putting this thesis in context. First, *who* is at issue, or how people come to identify and perceive relationships between ingroups and outgroups. Second, *what* is at stake, or why some situational factors like competition for resources and fear of disruptions to public health and safety can lead to negative outcomes between host communities and newcomers. Third, *how* the stakes are

manipulated may influence the outcome, as certain actors in the community may provoke or promote negative responses to newcomers to leverage the situation for their own benefit.

The literature on each of these topics presents three lenses that can respectively be used to answer these who-what-how questions. *Social identity theory* (SIT) posits at its base that people identify with certain “ingroups” in contrast to outgroups that may jockey with them for resources, favors, or power.¹ These identities are not fixed but rather positional with respect to external conditions and internal status judgments. *Sociofunctional analysis* looks at intergroup relations between settled and migrant communities in terms of an emotional response to the circumstances of their interaction; competition induces anger and a combative response, threats to health and safety induce fear and an avoidance response, and appeals to the community’s moral obligations induce pity and a prosocial response.² *Moral panic* explores the ways in which some element of the community may exploit migrant outgroups by deliberately yoking them to a fear or frustration of the community overall.³

I applied these three lenses to three American environmental disasters that involved large numbers of people enduring long-term displacement from their homes.

1. The southwestern U.S. Dust Bowl (drought, windstorms) of the 1930s, in which slow-onset conditions allowed residents to choose both when they depart and where they would go.
2. Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast (cyclone, flooding) in 2005, a sudden large-footprint event for which a sizeable portion of the evacuees were

¹ Michael A. Hogg, “Social Identity Theory,” in *Understanding Peace and Conflict through Social Identity Theory: Contemporary Global Perspectives*, ed. Shelley McKeown, Reeshma Haji, and Neil Ferguson, Peace Psychology Book Series (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 7.

² Catherine A. Cottrell and Steven L. Neuberg, “Different Emotional Reactions to Different Groups: A Sociofunctional Threat-Based Approach to ‘Prejudice,’” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 88, no. 5 (2005): 770–89.

³ Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance* (Singapore: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 2-3.

forced to relocate and were not given a choice about their immediate destinations.

3. The California wildfires of 2017–2018, a sudden small-footprint event for which most survivors stayed near the site of their sending communities.

In each of these events, there was evidence of resource competition and of concerns for health and safety; what differed was the outgroup status of the displaced and the attempts to manipulate the situation to scapegoat the migrants. After synthesizing the outcomes of these events, I created a disaster-displacement model to describe the pathway from event to outcome in two main stages: an overall disaster event and a response specific to each host community.

In addition to the “where” of each host community, the “who” and “what” are largely decided at the time of the disaster event; geography, socioeconomic status, and infrastructure quality determine which groups will have to move and where they can go. The mix of factors is distinct for each community that evacuees may go to, but the differences between the migrants and their host community will mark the newcomers as outsiders of especial importance. A sudden change in local demographics that coincides with general uncertainty over shared resources or community well-being can exacerbate the tensions around all manner of local issues.

The “how” is the primary level of control through which powerful political or media voices can further amplify or mitigate outcomes, by setting the tone for local-newcomer interactions and policies. If community leaders do nothing or engage in behavior that encourages negative-framing or creates a moral panic, then conflict, segregation, and other negative outcomes are more likely. Legitimate challenges can be weaponized into targeted resentment, stigmatizing survivors as a burden or danger to the community long-term.

Being entirely qualitative, this model cannot predict what combination of factors will lead to a particular outcome. What it does is create a baseline for understanding how different communities can react differently to a similar cohort of evacuees and place those reactions in context. At base, the proposal here is that there are two very different schemata for how people perceive nonimmigrant newcomers. In one, the national “umbrella”

citizenship takes precedence and these fellow Americans are recognized as enjoying their right to domestic freedom of movement. In the other, local citizenship takes precedence and the host community sees newcomers something akin to domestic refugees, an outgroup to be dealt with reluctantly at best or chased away if deemed necessary. The negative consequences of this latter view indicate that the United States would be prudent to explore creating an IDP policy and minimize the likelihood that the conditions of post-disaster displacement end up adding insult to injury.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have so many people to thank for helping me wrestle this monster into a respectable shape. First, I would not have been able to attend CHDS without the enthusiastic support of Roland Lyons, Rebecca Galindo, and Jennifer LaForce, whose recommendations got me in the door even though it meant they'd have to work around my reduced presence in the USCIS San Francisco District Office.

The inspiration for this thesis was provided by dedicated naturalist Edgar Xochitl; it's thanks to him that I even picked up the U.S. Global Change Research Program's 2018 *National Climate Assessment* and got to thinking about the intersection of environmental risks, domestic migration, and human security. Thanks also go to Drs. Nikhil Londhe and Cameron Bess for letting me bounce ideas off them during our many bibulous discussions. I am lucky to be surrounded by so many thoughtful and accomplished QPOC.

At CHDS, gratitude is due to my advisors, Dr. Carolyn Halladay and John Rollins, who pushed me to never let my "thises" and "thats" go unreferenced. Thanks also to the faculty and staff for your dedication to the program, and to the 1805/06 cohort for offering me a window into other worlds.

Most importantly, my deepest gratitude to my husband, Mike Madison, and to my parents, Steve and Carolyn Locke. To have people who unconditionally love you while you are going through a ridiculously arcane and time-intensive research program—as well as planning and pulling off a wedding in the middle of it—is both a relief and a true blessing.

This research is dedicated to the important work done by local and independent journalists, without whom it would be impossible for most of us to know what's happening around the corner, much less around the world.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In [the aftermath of Hurricane] Katrina, what is especially challenging is the disaster started in one place and it's ending in another place.

—A social worker aiding Gulf Coast evacuees in Denver¹

In recent years, millions of Americans have been forced from their homes by environmental events spanning hurricanes on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, flooding in the Midwest, wildfires in California, and volcanic eruption in Hawaii.² Often the disruption in people's lives is temporary: once the acute danger of a disaster event has passed, damaged property can be rehabilitated and the people who evacuated can return to their homes. A substantial minority of evacuees, however, find themselves displaced for the longer term and must find alternative accommodations or relocate to a new community to begin their lives again. In the worst cases, people moving to new communities are treated not as neighbors enduring a temporary setback, but more like refugees in their own country, a burdensome and unfamiliar cohort disrupting the livelihoods of those around them.

Due both to the effects of climate change on weather patterns and to the ongoing propensity of people to settle more densely in areas vulnerable to disaster events, displacement has been occurring with increasing frequency both in the United States and around the world.³ Such physical disruptions can present societal risks from a weakened social contract and increases in poverty to an overall erosion of the citizen's right to

¹ Lori Peek, "They Call It 'Katrina Fatigue': Displaced Families and Discrimination in Colorado," in *Displaced: Life in the Katrina Diaspora*, ed. Lynn Weber and Lori Peek, The Katrina Bookshelf (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 33, <https://utpress.utexas.edu/books/webdis>.

² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019* (Geneva: Norwegian Refugee Council, 2019), 39, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/2019-IDMC-GRID.pdf>.

³ For example, Americans are settling in increasing numbers in areas prone to earthquakes and exposed to sea-level rise and wildfires. Diana F. Wong et al., "Disaster Metrics: A Comprehensive Framework for Disaster Evaluation Typologies," *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 32, no. 5 (October 2017): 501–14, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X17006471>. See also U.S. Global Change Research Program, "Fourth National Climate Assessment," 2018, 56, <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov>.

freedom of movement. This thesis seeks to help mitigate these risks by presenting a more holistic understanding of the secondary effects of disasters on the displaced and the communities that receive them.

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The term “internally displaced persons,” or IDPs, emerged in the international humanitarian community in the 1990s to refer to people or groups who are forced from their homes by conflicts or environmental disasters and must seek shelter elsewhere.⁴ Unlike refugees or asylum-seekers, who have crossed an international border in pursuit of safe harbor, the responsibility for the well-being of IDPs still rests with their home nation. While internal displacement is commonly considered a developing-world phenomenon due to the high profile of civil conflicts, environmentally induced displacement in the United States has in recent years ranked it among the world’s 10 countries with the highest number of involuntary or “forced” internal migrants.⁵

Despite the relative wealth and the strength of social institutions in the United States, it still must contend with the social corrosion and intergroup conflict possibly resulting from displacement and resettlement. Displacement is a disruptive life event; losing one’s home is a source of traumatic stress, more so, if one cannot return to one’s home community and must either relocate elsewhere or endure unstable housing.⁶ Furthermore, the presence of displaced people in receiving communities is sometimes treated as disruptive and unwelcome, a threat to the peace and security of the places they seek to rebuild their lives. The recent experiences of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the California wildfires of 2017–2018, as well as earlier events like the Dust Bowl migration

⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* (Geneva: United Nations, 1998), <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>.

⁵ The only other developed nation in the top 20 is Japan, with a displacement rate only a third as high as America’s. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019*, 5.

⁶ Elizabeth Fussell and Sarah R. Lowe, “The Impact of Housing Displacement on the Mental Health of Low-Income Parents after Hurricane Katrina,” *Social Science & Medicine* 113 (July 2014): 137–44, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.05.025>.

of the 1930s, have been marked by strained relationship between the displaced and the communities where they seek shelter. These internal migrations have prompted several responses from host communities ranging from wary to antagonistic.

- Following the Dust Bowl migration, many of the 300,000 “Okies” who moved to California were subjected to voter removal campaigns and challenges to the legality of their ballots at the polls, among other attempts to simply prevent them from voting.⁷ Public calls to keep indigent migrants out of California led the chief of the Los Angeles Police Department to send volunteer officers to state ports of entry (POEs)—hundreds of miles away from the city—to man a “bum blockade” for two months in 1936.⁸ The accumulated efforts to turn people away at the state border forced the U.S. Supreme Court to weigh in, ruling in *Edwards v. California* that states had no right to interfere with U.S. citizens’ internal freedom of movement.⁹
- In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, other communities in Louisiana and Texas tried to close bridges or turn away busloads of evacuees coming from the New Orleans area.¹⁰ Houstonians berated the 200,000 evacuees who settled there for purportedly raising the local crime rate; surveys of residents in 2006 and 2010 showed that majorities of both black and white residents considered the mass relocation of evacuees “a bad thing.”¹¹

⁷ Walter J. Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, Contributions in American History 21 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 95–96.

⁸ Stein, 73.

⁹ James N. Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 99.

¹⁰ Gary Rivlin, *Katrina: After the Flood* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 6–13, <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Katrina/Gary-Rivlin/9781451692259>.

¹¹ Evidence shows there was no noticeable change in Houston’s crime rate after the evacuees arrived. Deirdre M. Warren, “Color-Blind Racism in Post-Obama America: An Examination of Attitudes toward Hurricane Katrina Evacuees in Houston, Texas,” *Race and Social Problems* 5, no. 3 (2013): 218, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-013-9090-1>.

- The recent California wildfires rendered tens of thousands of people homeless overnight, with local officials referring to the situation as a potential “refugee migration” crisis.¹² As in many other displacement events, the displaced found themselves being resented due to perceived special treatment privileging them above other needy communities.¹³

In each of these cases, the story is of American citizens perceiving their fellow citizens as outsiders, largely based on their status as displaced persons.

The potential for conflict from displacement touches every corner of the United States for two reasons. First, every part of the country is vulnerable to some form of environmental risk. Despite the tendency of the public to focus on a few headline events, 90 percent of U.S. counties have seen a federally declared major disaster in the last decade.¹⁴ According to NOAA data, the years 2016 through 2018 were each marked by over a dozen disaster events costing at least a billion dollars in damages, whereas no year before 2008 had ever seen more than 10 such events.¹⁵ Secondly, domestic freedom of movement virtually ensures that the difficult adjustment following a disaster cannot always be accounted for in predictable patterns, as people go or are sent wherever in the country there is space. The United States has largely been spared the turmoil of lower-income countries with large IDP populations like Colombia and Syria, but it is not immune from the potential for massive social dislocation from generational poverty to the breakdown of

¹² Ryan Sabalow et al., “Refugee Camps for Fire Survivors? Butte County on ‘Edge’ of Humanitarian Crisis after Camp Fire,” *The Sacramento Bee*, November 14, 2018, <https://www.sacbee.com/news/california/fires/article221594715.html>.

¹³ Alexandra S. Levine, “After a California Wildfire, New and Old Homeless Populations Collide,” *The New York Times*, December 3, 2018, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/03/us/california-fire-homeless.html>.

¹⁴ Federal declarations are pursued only when a disaster’s effects exceed the capacity of local governments to respond to it. Rachel Leven and Joe Yerardi, “How Our Data Can Help You Dig into Disasters,” Center for Public Integrity, October 28, 2019, <https://publicintegrity.org/environment/one-disaster-away/how-our-data-can-help-you-dig-into-disaster-impacts-climate-change/>.

¹⁵ This is true regardless of whether the data are CPI-adjusted to account for the lower comparative value of the dollar in earlier years. See NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), “U.S. Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters,” 2019, <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/>.

trust in institutions and leaders.¹⁶ Given the imaginable and unimaginable challenges of reintegrating those displaced in the next cataclysm, there is value in creating a framework for understanding what those potential effects can be and how they originate.

B. RESEARCH QUESTION

The principal question this thesis confronts is: How can host communities predict, prepare for, or mitigate the effects of conflict from disaster displacement? Some subsidiary questions that intersect with and inform this central concern include the following two:

- How does disaster displacement contribute to the social distance and conflict between displaced people and host communities?
- Should the U.S. government consider enacting an IDP protection policy?

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

The keys to understanding where to begin with the project of defining how displacement alters the social fabric are twofold by (a) establishing a baseline understanding of sociological thought about how groups relate to each other and (b) tracing how this understanding is both tied to identity and why it is prone to set the stage for segregation or conflict. Three elements of this dynamic are key to putting this thesis in context: *who* is at issue, or how people come to identify and perceive relationships between ingroups and outgroups; *what* is at stake, or why some situational factors lead to negative outcomes between host communities and newcomers; and *how* the stakes are manipulated, as certain actors in the community may provoke or promote negative responses to newcomers to leverage the situation for their own benefit. The literature on each of these topics has coalesced around three ideas that respectively seek to explain them: social identity theory, sociofunctional analysis, and moral panic.

¹⁶ Furthermore, as a large and heterogeneous society, the United States encompasses such regional and other forms of diversity as to prompt frequent debate on national unity.

1. Social Distance, Group Membership, and Social Identity

The literature on socialization and group identity is vast and far-reaching, allowing for a variety of threads to pursue. Beginning in the 1920s, Bogardus developed a *social distance* scale to make sense of the varied sympathetic and prejudicial responses he observed within the United States to both immigrants and domestic migrants of different ethnic backgrounds.¹⁷ Within this scale, the degree of social distance between an individual and a person of a different ethnic background could be represented by a numerical score, from 1 for “willing to intermarry” to 7 for “I don’t want them in my country.”¹⁸ The lower the distance score, the less perceived social distance a person would feel from the group under consideration. Reardon and Firebaugh noted that social distance may reflect not only a cultural but also a spatial aspect, and may be key to understanding segregation dynamics—physical proximity is both an indicator of social proximity and a determinant of access to institutional resources.¹⁹

Over time, the scale came to be extended to other patterns around sympathy and discrimination, with researchers proposing such refinements as basing the score on the intensity of the respondent’s feelings.²⁰ This *affective* social distance at its most dangerous can become an ingredient in the perpetration of hate crimes; it may be contrasted with *interactive* social distance, which merely describes the day-to-day depth of interaction of

¹⁷ For example, “The attitudinal significance of regional and cultural variations is especially clear when case studies are made of the effects of moving from one region to another. After a person moves, he usually finds himself in conflict with racial attitudes that are at least partially new and strange to him.” Emory S. Bogardus, “Regional and Cultural Contacts,” in *Immigration and Race Attitudes* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1928), 167.

¹⁸ Colin Wark and John F. Galliher, “Emory Bogardus and the Origins of the Social Distance Scale,” *The American Sociologist* 38, no. 4 (December 2007): 392.

¹⁹ Sean F. Reardon and Glenn Firebaugh, “Response: Segregation and Social Distance: A Generalized Approach to Segregation Measurement,” *Sociological Methodology* 32 (2002): 85–87.

²⁰ Darin M. Mather, Stephen W. Jones, and Scott Moats, “Improving upon Bogardus: Creating a More Sensitive and Dynamic Social Distance Scale,” *Survey Practice* 10, no. 4 (October 1, 2017): 2770, <https://doi.org/10.29115/SP-2017-0026>.

people from different social groups, and with *normative* social distance, or how clearly people recognize who is and is not a member of their identity groups.²¹

In the 1960s, Berger and Luckmann declared that socialization—the process of becoming part of a group—is so important to one’s identity that “the facts of life” are different for different groups and that a change in one’s group affiliations are akin to “switching worlds.”²² Through a different prism, Collier considers group identity as the circle within which one can project “mutual regard,” in other words being able to see oneself and one’s interests reflected in one’s family members, community members, and even fellow citizens.²³ Society, he contends, is built on a concept of empathy based on “a shared sense of identity” such that any regard or responsibility for the less fortunate, whether a newcomer or established member of the community, depends on the wealthy being able to recognize their shared humanity.²⁴

By the late 1970s, the sociological study of intergroup relations had developed an entire body of literature on social identity theory (SIT), organized around “markers” that delimited the importance of belonging and how it influences conflict.²⁵ Essentially, every *ingroup* (form of self-identification) defines itself, whether explicitly or by inference, in distinction to an *outgroup*, with conflict arising in zero-sum competition for some *limited good*.²⁶ Tajfel was the godfather of SIT, with a number of other scholars coming together in conversation to explore its nuances. For example, Turner found that when primed by

²¹ Ashley Crossman, “On Social Distance and Why It Matters,” ThoughtCo, July 3, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/social-distance-3026589>.

²² Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 137, 157.

²³ Paul Collier, *Exodus: How Migration Is Changing Our World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 68.

²⁴ Collier, 84.

²⁵ See Henri Tajfel, ed., *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (Oxford: Academic Press, 1978).

²⁶ Michael A. Hogg, “Social Identity Theory,” in *Understanding Peace and Conflict through Social Identity Theory: Contemporary Global Perspectives*, ed. Shelley McKeown, Reeshma Haji, and Neil Ferguson, Peace Psychology Book Series (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 7.

something that evokes group identity, people tend to regard one another in terms of their category membership.²⁷ Brown and Ross developed the idea that even an abstract “threat to identity” would be sufficient to spur a group to conflict.²⁸ More recently, Brannan, Darken, and Strindberg, in applying Tajfel’s ideas to the sociology of conflict and terrorism, have highlighted the associated concept of *social mobility*—that by not living up to certain expectations, a member of the ingroup may be reassessed into an outgroup.²⁹

Hogg identified key elements of the ingroup/outgroup relationship as relative *status* between them, the *stability* of the relationship, the *legitimacy* and *permeability* of these group identities, and *cognitive alternatives*: whether there was a different way to conceive the relationship between them.³⁰ From those elements he developed an “uncertainty-identity theory” (UIT), claiming that periods of great upheaval or uncertainty spur people to more readily draw social boundaries in order to improve their sense of understanding of the world around them.³¹ Lüders, et al., consider UIT to have *cognitive* (thought), *affective* (emotional), and *behavioral* dimensions, which together reassess any negative change to either one’s current status (a life of comfort) or sense of self (categorical identity) into an anxious reaction.³² The resulting anxiety-to-approach model translates perceived threats

²⁷ John C. Turner, “Toward a Cognitive Redefinition of the Social Group,” in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 29.

²⁸ Rupert J. Brown and Gordon F. Ross, “The Battle for Acceptance: An Investigation into the Dynamics of Intergroup Behavior,” in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 161.

²⁹ David W. Brannan, Kristin M. Darken, and Anders Strindberg, *A Practitioner’s Way Forward: Terrorism Analysis* (Salinas, CA: Agile Press, 2014), 59.

³⁰ Hogg, “Social Identity Theory,” 7.

³¹ Hogg, 10.

³² Adrian Lüders et al., “Between the Lines of Us and Them: Identity Threat, Anxious Uncertainty, and Reactive In-Group Affirmation: How Can Antisocial Outcomes Be Prevented?,” in *Understanding Peace and Conflict through Social Identity Theory: Contemporary Global Perspectives*, ed. Shelley McKeown, Reeshma Haji, and Neil Ferguson, Peace Psychology Book Series (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016).

from unfamiliar groups as a call to harden categories, retreat into one's known group, and display hostile behavior toward outsiders.³³

2. Resource Concerns, Security, and Sociofunctional Analysis

Historically, the backlash against migrants has built on this ingroup-outgroup distinction in one of two ways: as either a competition for resources (e.g., the “limited good” of SIT) or an affront to the goals of integration and assimilation.³⁴ Desbarats, in looking at the concentration and dispersal of resettled refugees in the United States, enumerates popular concerns about newcomers being a strain on the capacity of the community.³⁵ Her examples range from the budgetary (planning for resource allocation in public works upgrades) to the positional (resentment of newcomers' dependency on welfare or other assistance while the local long-term indigent may not have specialized resources available to them). By contrast, Duffy examines a tumultuous native-refugee relationship in the upper Midwest as part of a long pattern of hostility toward groups that were not quick to assimilate.³⁶ Reimers merges both of these concerns—economic competition and cultural positional dominance—as he carefully catalogues the fears of scarcity and vulnerability that feed arguments against welcoming humanitarian immigrants.³⁷

This distrust of international arrivals has analogues for domestic migration as well. The unstable sense of *security* at the community level is a recurrent theme in the emerging literature on IDPs. Elliott describes the “securitization” of internal migration as an anticipation of “tensions between those displaced within their own country and the

³³ Lüders et al., 43–44.

³⁴ Whereas “assimilation” privileges the local culture as a goal for the newcomers to bend toward, “integration” represents a two-way adjustment of weaving together multiple communities.

³⁵ Jacqueline Desbarats, “Policy Influences on Refugee Resettlement Patterns,” *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 65–66, no. 1 (1986): 51.

³⁶ John Duffy, “Letters from the Fair City: A Rhetorical Conception of Literacy,” *College Composition and Communication* 56, no. 2 (December 2004): 230.

³⁷ David M. Reimers, *Unwelcome Strangers: American Identity and the Turn against Immigration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

communities into which they move.”³⁸ Her view builds on Clark’s concept of “successful” migration as only one of three outcomes; the acceptance of environmental migrants into receiving community, the migrants failing to integrate and returning home, or the development of conflict in the receiving community over shared resources.³⁹ Reuveny notes however that while “ecomigration”—the phenomenon of people fleeing a disaster or degraded environment—often *can* lead to conflict, that does not mean that it *must*.⁴⁰ While he considers the outcomes of both the Dust Bowl and Hurricane Katrina, and in particular, the competitive and suspicious antagonisms the hosts demonstrated, he acknowledges that such responses were not universal.⁴¹

In recent years, the research on migration and security has focused on the emotional stakes of the receiving community in its response to a group of new arrivals. Abeywickrama, Laham, and Crone note that the *type* of threat perceived by the receiving community is often what drives its response. If the migrants are assumed to pose a material threat (i.e., competing for scarce resources), the local community may respond aggressively; if the threat is a perceived risk to public health or safety (e.g., carrying communicable diseases or increasing crime), locals will avoid the newcomers.⁴² Cottrell and Neuberg traced out an “evolutionary approach” to this relationship, pairing specific

³⁸ Lorraine Elliott, “Climate Migration and Climate Migrants: What Threat, Whose Security?” in *Climate Change and Displacement: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Jane McAdam (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2010), 182, <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/18027>.

³⁹ William A. V. Clark, “Environmentally Induced Migration and Conflict” (Berlin: German Advisory Council on Global Change, 2007), 10, http://www.wbgu.de/wbgu_jg2007_ex04.pdf.

⁴⁰ Rafael Reuveny, “Ecomigration and Violent Conflict: Case Studies and Public Policy Implications,” *Human Ecology* 36, no. 1 (2008): 5.

⁴¹ Reuveny, “Ecomigration and Violent Conflict.”

⁴² R. S. Abeywickrama, S. M. Laham, and D. L. Crone, “Immigration and Receiving Communities: The Utility of Threats and Emotions in Predicting Action Tendencies toward Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Economic Migrants,” *Journal of Social Issues* 74, no. 4 (2018): 758, <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12297>.

stimuli to emotional patterns and reactions, with anger, disgust, fear, pity, and guilt serving as the connection between them.⁴³ (See Figure 1.)

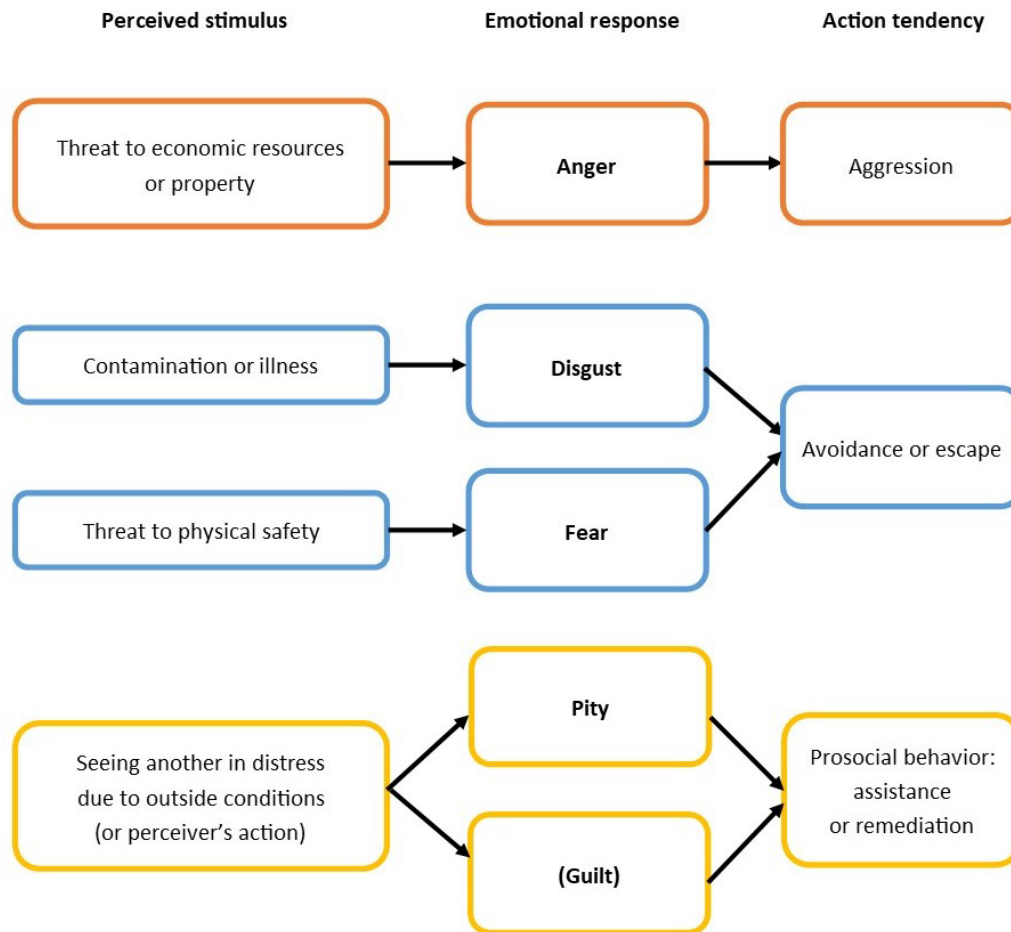


Figure 1. Sociofunctional Relationships from Perception to Action⁴⁴

⁴³ The authors also listed envy as a separate emotional category, however it does not demonstrate a pathway distinct that from of anger in their research. Catherine A. Cottrell and Steven L. Neuberg, "Different Emotional Reactions to Different Groups: A Sociofunctional Threat-Based Approach to 'Prejudice,'" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 88, no. 5 (2005): 772.

⁴⁴ Adapted from Cottrell and Neuberg.

Aubé and Ric recently conducted cross-cultural studies concluding that this “sociofunctional” or emotionally mediated theory of prejudice has shown statistical validity for linking perceived threat to receiving communities’ behavior.⁴⁵

Ferwerda, Flynn, and Horiuchi tie the local response to refugee resettlement programs to both a collective-action problem and a question of media framing.⁴⁶ The former factor resembles a NIMBY (“not in my backyard”) response, where people support the *idea* of a thing (e.g., a service being provided or, classically, the development of high-density housing) but resent the prospect that it may encroach on their lives or inconvenience them.⁴⁷ The latter demonstrates the effect of how authority figures present information, which shapes popular opinion; this process has been investigated over the past 50 years in the literature around a concept called “moral panic.”

3. Influencing Perception and Action: Moral Panic

In a *moral panic* situation, a purported “deviant” practice by an identifiable group of outsiders is highlighted as a threat to the community’s well-being; here, that deviance may be simply disrupting the status quo around the provision of public services. The term was first popularized by Cohen, who observed how mass-communication channels could be used to highlight and reinforce social norms.⁴⁸ An outgroup is identified as “degenerate” in some way by someone influential in the community (whether an individual or a motivated group in the community); that influential character then disseminates his opinion through the magnifying effect of mass communication channels, engendering a response

⁴⁵ Benoite Aubé and François Ric, “The Sociofunctional Model of Prejudice: Questioning the Role of Emotions in the Threat-Behavior Link,” *International Review of Social Psychology* 32, no. 1 (2019): 1, <https://doi.org/10.5334/irsp.169>.

⁴⁶ Jeremy Ferwerda, D. J. Flynn, and Yusaku Horiuchi, “Explaining Opposition to Refugee Resettlement: The Role of NIMBYism and Perceived Threats,” *Science Advances* 3, no. 9 (September 2017): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.1700812>.

⁴⁷ This also echoes back to Desbarats’s research, noted previously.

⁴⁸ Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (New York: Routledge, 1972).

out of proportion to the actual danger to the community.⁴⁹ Cohen concludes that the marking of the identified groups as “outsiders” from the normative culture served to spotlight the culture’s norms and fears.

In the decades since Cohen first published, the theory of moral panic has inspired a variety of offshoots and responses. Goode and Ben-Yehuda catalogue three sources of moral panic: elite (upper-class), grassroots/populist (often working- or lower-class), and focused (middle-class) interest group forces, noting that the theory has attracted criticism as well.⁵⁰ Garland enumerates three of these main criticisms: that the concept of a reaction “out of proportion” to a social threat is vague, that the basic theory of moral panic miscasts social groups as conscious individuals, and that the concept of what is “moral” or “immoral” has become virtually meaningless in the 21st century.⁵¹ Nevertheless, moral panic retains cachet in describing community reactions to the presence of “outsiders.”

The extension of moral panic from local subcultures to immigrant groups largely focuses on a perceived nexus between arriving groups and increases in crime. Even though Zatz and Smith conclude that this perception does not reflect reality, as “dozens of studies have demonstrated that increased immigration serves a protective function” to reduce crime rates, the assumption of newcomers being dangerous remains widespread.⁵² The most fertile ground for such panic, they note, is in “new receiving sites” that are unfamiliar with integrating migrants. Greussing and Boomgaarden explore the role of media in fomenting public attitudes about new arrivals, cataloguing a series of “frames” around which coverage can be organized. These largely coalesce around a *victimization* frame, in which the

⁴⁹ These panics often coalesce around invented dangers to children, with examples ranging from the Satanic ritual sex-abuse cults of the 1980s to the Momo Challenge—in which YouTube videos allegedly encouraged watchers to commit suicide—of 2018.

⁵⁰ Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance* (Singapore: John Wiley & Sons, 2010).

⁵¹ David Garland, “On the Concept of Moral Panic,” *Crime, Media, Culture* 4, no. 1 (April 2008): 9–30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659007087270>.

⁵² Marjorie S. Zatz and Hilary Smith, “Immigration, Crime, and Victimization: Rhetoric and Reality,” *Annual Review of Crime and Social Science* 8 (December 2012): 141–59, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-102811-173923>.

newcomers are described as in need due to circumstances outside their control; an *illegality and crime* frame, in which they demonstrate a threat to public morals and safety; an *economization* frame that focuses on the resources being shifted from the host population to serve the newcomers; and an *elemental force* frame that sees them as a dehumanized “other.”⁵³

Longazel brings a more critical dimension to the immigrant-panic idea, positing that the focus on crime is especially common in communities that are already troubled—if even by unrelated challenges like failing schools, job losses, and economic uncertainty in manufacturing-heavy towns.⁵⁴ Moore and Forkert echo this point, noting that much of the anti-immigrant rhetoric in the United Kingdom has attempted to blame new arrivals for the shortage of affordable housing and other persistent struggles of the working class.⁵⁵ In all these cases, there exists the common thread of “outsiders,” whether national, racial, cultural, or otherwise, serving as a focal point for a problem perceived but not causally linked to them.

4. Summation

One element shared by all three of these lenses is a connection between intergroup divisions and conflict over shared resources. When resources are scarce or finite, they will be seen less as “shared” than as a basis for competition. (See Table 1)

⁵³ Note the resonance here with both the outgroup focus of social identity theory and the appeals to emotional triggers of sociofunctional analysis. Esther Greussing and Hajo G. Boomgaarden, “Shifting the Refugee Narrative? An Automated Frame Analysis of Europe’s 2015 Refugee Crisis,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43, no. 11 (August 18, 2017): 1751, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1282813>.

⁵⁴ Notably, in comparing media coverage of two violent acts, only the one that comported with the narrative of a dangerous outsider gained traction in the local community. Jamie G Longazel, “Moral Panic as Racial Degradation Ceremony: Racial Stratification and the Local-Level Backlash against Latino/a Immigrants,” *Punishment & Society* 15, no. 1 (January 2013): 96–119, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474512466200>.

⁵⁵ Phoebe Moore and Kirsten Forkert, “Class and Panic in British Immigration,” *Capital & Class* 38, no. 3 (October 2014): 497–505, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816814549297>. Pijpers offers a similar assessment for the reluctance to open the Dutch labor market to Eastern European workers, despite that many Poles were already present in the country. Roos Pijpers, “‘Help! The Poles Are Coming’: Narrating a Contemporary Moral Panic,” *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography* 88, no. 1 (2006): 91–103.

Table 1. Three Lenses on Resource Competition in a Host Community

Theoretical Lens	View of Intergroup Conflict	Ancillary Concern
Social Identity Theory ⁵⁶	Ingroup (locals) and outgroup (newcomers) are defined and in compete for access to and use of such a finite “limited good” as tax monies, housing, or educational and public health resources	The competition takes the form of a perceived or implicit “challenge and response” cycle where actions bring honor and shame
Sociofunctional Analysis ⁵⁷	Host community is stimulated to anger by the perceived threat of newcomers infringing on their claim to property or resources	Other threats to public welfare (of disease, crime, or tarnishing the “good name” of the community) stimulate other responses, from aversion to assistance
Moral Panic ⁵⁸	An actor (elites, media, trade groups, etc.) within the local community deliberately associates a threat to the community’s well-being with an identifiable outgroup and scapegoats that group for it, regardless of the veracity of the linkage	This intentional driver of conflict can exacerbate or amplify legitimate concerns about local resources and turn a problem into a crisis

Depending on the history and concerns of a given community, locals may apply readily available reference frames (e.g., neighborly acquaintances, a criminal element, or lazy public-benefits moochers) to new arrivals, coloring their interaction from the beginning.

Group membership is fluid; people can be scapegoated or pushed out of society if they are perceived to represent a threat or undesirable element.⁵⁹ Displaced persons may prejudices are projected onto them, or they may fill a need by local leaders to find someone

⁵⁶ This row abstracted from Shelley McKeown, Reeshma Haji, and Neil Ferguson, *Understanding Peace and Conflict through Social Identity Theory: Contemporary Global Perspectives*, Peace Psychology Book Series (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016).

⁵⁷ This row abstracted from Cottrell and Neuberg, “Different Emotional Reactions to Different Groups: A Sociofunctional Threat-Based Approach to ‘Prejudice.’”

⁵⁸ This row abstracted from Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance* (Singapore: John Wiley & Sons, 2010).

⁵⁹ Notably, as Tajfel said, “social groups are not ‘things’; they are processes.” Henri Tajfel, “Instrumentality, Identity, and Social Comparisons,” in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 485.

convenient to blame for the community's unrelated and pre-existing insecurities.⁶⁰ More prosaically, the newcomers' presence may introduce new problems for the community that concern the locals' own comfort, health, or safety.⁶¹ Regardless, the burden of avoiding the ire of natives while rebuilding their lives after chance devastation only adds insult to injury. Yet by considering all these dynamics in concert, they may be woven together to present a picture of how to avoid those pitfalls and secure a path toward more harmonious integration.

D. RESEARCH DESIGN

This research takes a qualitative approach to understanding relationships between migrants and host communities. Using the preceding literature review as a jumping-off point, I applied those three sociological concepts (social identity theory, sociofunctional analysis, and moral panic) to pinpoint historical conditions that ameliorated or exacerbated social distance and conflict in post-disaster displacement scenarios. The resulting frictions can be signposted by documented indicators from the host communities, in roughly increasing order of seriousness: (1) negative popular opinion, as evidenced by public surveys and academic research; (2) adversarial media or political campaigns noted by reputable secondary sources; (3) denial of services (e.g., housing, education, and employment discrimination or voter disenfranchisement) based on domestic migrant status; and (4) physical interference with migrants' movement or well-being via blockades or violence.

1. Approach

The question under scrutiny here and the goal of building a theory to make sense of a complex phenomenon lend themselves to a mixed case-study and historical-review approach, where specific events can be inspected to see what themes and connections

⁶⁰ Tanya Settles and Bruce R. Lindsay, "Crime in Post-Katrina Houston: The Effects of Moral Panic on Emergency Planning," *Disasters* 35, no. 1 (2011): 213, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7717.2010.01200.x>.

⁶¹ Jacqueline Desbarats, "Policy Influences on Refugee Resettlement Patterns," *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 65–66, no. 1 (1986): 60; Reuveny, "Ecomigration and Violent Conflict," 3.

emerge.⁶² Using a retrospective and comparative baseline, multiple events can serve to highlight the varied conditions and experiences of disaster victims and the ways they allow us to consider what circumstances lead to social frictions and negative status changes. I have selected three mass displacements in the United States to be the centerpiece of this analysis. The cases selected for review were chosen to represent key “biggest of their kind” events over the past hundred years. Each has generated a displaced population of at least tens of thousands, and each is intended to illustrate a distinct mix of challenges and outcomes for the displacement. In chronological order:

1. **The Southwestern Dust Bowl (drought, windstorms) of the 1930s:** this case represents slow-onset conditions, which allowed residents to choose both when they depart and where they would go.
2. **Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast (cyclone, flooding) in 2005:** this case represents a sudden large-footprint event for which a sizeable portion of the evacuees were forced to relocate and were not given a choice about their immediate destinations.
3. **The California wildfires of 2017–2018:** this case represents a sudden small-footprint event for which the majority of survivors stayed near the site of their sending communities.⁶³

My research primarily entailed a close reading of scholarly books and journal articles, government reports and statistics, and—where applicable—contemporaneous news

⁶² Guidance for the development of this approach came from Gary Thomas, *How to Do Your Case Study*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2016) and Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2018).

⁶³ Other potential case studies from recent years were the Harvey-Irma-Maria (HIM) hurricane sequence of 2017, Superstorm Sandy in 2012, the national drought and heat waves of 2011–12, the tornado season of 2011, and the Midwest floods of 2008. These either were dwarfed by one of the cases selected or were too diffuse to gather sources for a clear narrative.

reporting.⁶⁴ Particularly in the case of Hurricane Katrina, the rich and still-evolving literature on the aftershocks of the event includes congressional testimony from the perspectives of the receiving communities.⁶⁵

I analyzed each of these events in terms of three sociological “lenses” chosen to shed light on different aspects of a displacement situation. Together, these lenses provide a comparative means for contextualizing (1) who is at issue, or the demographic *distinctions* that separate the displaced from their host communities, (2) what is at stake, or the inherent or *situational* drivers of conflict between them, and (3) how the stakes are amplified, the induced or *deliberate* drivers of such conflict.

First, distinctions are explored through *social identity theory* (SIT), which posits at its base that people identify with certain “ingroups” in contrast to outgroups that may jockey with them for resources, favors, or power. These identities are not fixed but rather positional with respect to external conditions and internal status judgments. Second, situational concerns are explored in terms of *sociofunctional analysis*. This approach looks at intergroup relations between settled and migrant communities in terms of an emotional response to the circumstances of their interaction; competition induces an anger response, threats to health and safety induce a fear response, and appeals to the community’s moral obligations induce a pity response. Finally, the concepts of deliberate persuasion through framing and *moral panic* explores the ways in which some element of the community may exploit migrant outgroups by deliberately yoking them to a fear or frustration of the community overall. These lenses ensure a parallel structure for the case studies but do not serve as a goal in themselves: the outcome is a synthesis of the common factors these case studies unearthed.

⁶⁴ In accord with Robert Yin’s description, a case study has a degree of contemporariness. While this applies to the effects of the California Wildfires, for which the victims are still in active recovery, it is not as apt for the Dust Bowl migration some 80 years ago. Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2018), 48.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Host Communities: Analyzing the Role and Needs of Communities That Take in Disaster Evacuees in the Wake of Major Disasters and Catastrophes: Hearing before the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Senate, 110th Cong., 1st sess., December 3, 2007, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110shrg40503/html/CHRG-110shrg40503.htm>.

2. Roadmap to the Research

Whereas Chapter I has described the problem by focusing on the host community's role and reactions, Chapter II of this thesis is an exploration of who is considered a displaced person and what particular challenges and vulnerabilities they face. It begins with a broad overview of the typologies and social effects of disaster and displacement, giving attention to the unique role of the United States in this conversation. The second half of the chapter investigates the government's role, enumerating the social contract of citizenship and what is meant by "protection" in international law and political philosophy.

Chapters III through V takes each of the case studies (Dust Bowl, Hurricane Katrina, and California wildfires) and applies the three sociological lenses to them. These case studies start with a timeline and demographic profile, then look at the ingroup-outgroup dynamics, the inherent situational factors (resource competition, health and safety concerns, and fatigue) that contribute to conflict and stigma, and conclude with deliberate efforts to control or exacerbate tensions in the community.

Chapter VI synthesizes the findings from the three cases and proposes a model and a set of holistic factors for relating the conditions of disaster to host-community attitudes and outcomes for the displaced. It looks at factors relevant to the how displaced people fit into the continuum of belonging, enumerates interventions that communities may consider for mitigating conflict, and suggests additional areas for research.

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II. DISASTER, DISPLACEMENT, AND PROTECTION

A fundamental aspect of security at the human level is having a place to belong. Factors beyond one's control, from events to institutions to simple geography, can influence how stable an individual's or family's living situation will be. On a societal level, disaster displacement is a massive challenge to homeland security.⁶⁶ Disasters are not just catalysts for disruptive change, but reflective of standing social inequities in how unevenly their effects are felt. Displacement not only makes political and social boundaries more salient, but trains focus on who deserves the protections of citizenship and how that can change in times of great uncertainty. Reintegration after displacement is thus not a solved problem where people can simply pick up their lives again after relocating, but at best a gamble on the strength of a national sense of community.

A. DISASTERS

The importance of a disaster as a threat to community well-being can be subdivided primarily into the brute physical effects of an incident or event and secondarily the social contours of the effects. Physical disruption is a visible result of the event, which can be assigned a specific economic valuation. Social disruption is much more difficult to make sense of, varies across communities, and carries its own aftershocks as people work to rebuild their lives.

1. Disaster as a Physical Event

The fundamental definition of disaster is largely taken as given; Shaluf summarizes the term as an event with "severe impacts in terms of people's lives, property, and the environment," regardless of the natural or human cause.⁶⁷ He and other academics in

⁶⁶ While a singular definition of homeland security is still being cast, most attempts have included "protecting the American people" in a general sense; the conversation frequently includes "recovery from natural disasters" and "preserving the rule of law and faith in institutions" as well. Shawn Reese, *Defining Homeland Security: Analysis and Congressional Considerations*, CRS Report, no. R42462 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013).

⁶⁷ Ibrahim Mohamed Shaluf, "Disaster Types," *Disaster Prevention and Management*; *Bradford* 16, no. 5 (2007): 713, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09653560710837019>.

recent years have been more focused on cataloguing the ways in which various public and nonprofit organizations group disasters into “types,” and have noted that there has been no universally accepted taxonomy.⁶⁸ Below, Wirtz, and Guha-Sapir led an international collaboration to lay out a standardized typology for natural disasters, based on a “triggering hazard or event” logic.⁶⁹ They determined the major origin categories to be geophysical (e.g., earthquakes and landslides), meteorological (storms), hydrological (flooding), and climatological (e.g., drought and wildfire).⁷⁰ Berren, Beigel, and Ghertner present five further factors for consideration: type (natural or human-induced), duration, immediate impact, recurrence, and control over future impact (i.e., potential for mitigation).⁷¹ Wong, et al., determined that the “grey literature”—of humanitarian organizations and other nonacademic sources—provide a robust but chaotic list of ways to evaluate disasters and propose a framework for comparison focused on baseline conditions, consequences, and outcomes.⁷²

Consequences and outcomes can at least be understood as a scalar concern. Glade and Alexander enumerate six scales of magnitude on which emergencies can be classified from *incidents* (smallest, local or standardized) to *catastrophes* (largest, international or overwhelming): impact, response, plans and procedures, resources, public involvement, and recovery challenges.⁷³ (See Figure 2.)

⁶⁸ Kenneth D. Bailey, “Taxonomy and Disaster: Prospects and Problems,” *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* 7, no. 3 (November 1989): 420.

⁶⁹ Regina Below, Angelika Wirtz, and Debarati Guha-Sapir, “Disaster Category Classification and Peril Terminology for Operational Purposes” (Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, October 2009), 8, <https://www.cred.be/node/564>.

⁷⁰ They acknowledged separate categories for biological (epidemics) and extraterrestrial (e.g., asteroids and meteors) events as well, but noted that these are not always included in the core definition of natural disaster.

⁷¹ M. R. Berren, A. Beigel, and S. Ghertner, “A Typology for the Classification of Disasters,” *Community Mental Health Journal* 16, no. 2 (1980): 104, <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00778582>.

⁷² Wong et al., “Disaster Metrics,” 502, 511.

⁷³ Thomas Glade and David E. Alexander, “Classification of Natural Disasters,” in *Encyclopedia of Natural Hazards*, ed. Peter T. Bobrowsky (Springer Reference, 2012), 79, DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4020-4399-4_61.

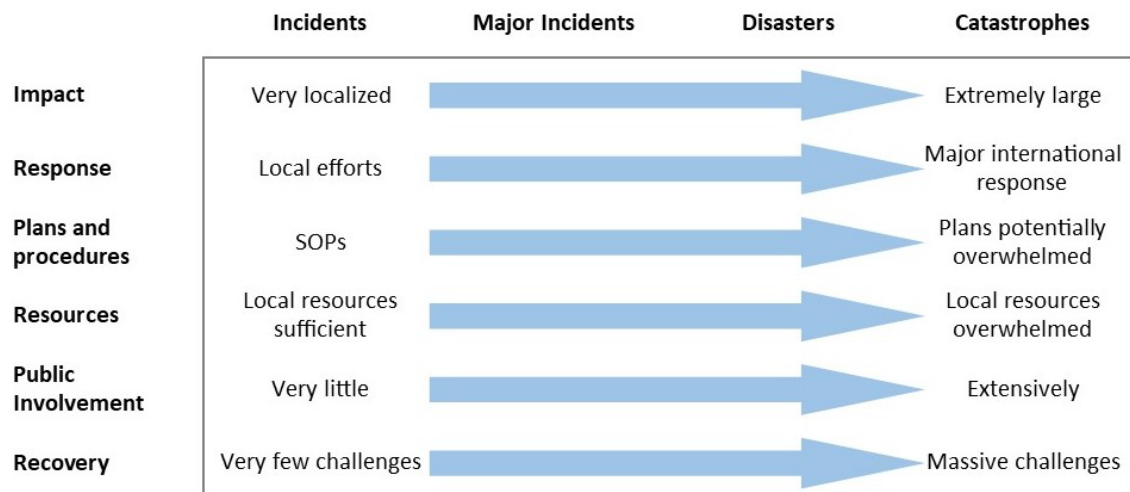


Figure 2. A Size Classification of Emergencies⁷⁴

Additional dimensions unrelated to size are speed of onset and predictability or recurrence.⁷⁵ Cohen and Bradley note that such slow-onset disasters as droughts, sea level rise (SLR), desertification, and extreme temperature patterns are particularly concerning, as the “tipping point” of danger is less clear and more a matter of judgment.⁷⁶ The urgency for the state to recognize and respond to an oncoming disaster is weaker when the environmental changes are too subtle or too drawn-out to convince the population to expend resources against it.

Magnitude is thus not merely a concern in terms of physical area affected; a major dust storm in the Sahara Desert, flooding deep in the Amazon rainforest, or an avalanche in Antarctica would not be a “disaster” if the area is unpopulated and there is no lasting environmental damage. The measure of a disaster is principally economic, predicated on its impact on and disruption to human livelihoods and infrastructure.

⁷⁴ Adapted from Glade and Alexander.

⁷⁵ The monsoon, for example, is a large-scale meteorological event understood to recur each year, but the disaster is measured by the impact on human lives and infrastructure.

⁷⁶ Roberta Cohen and Megan Bradley, “Disasters and Displacement: Gaps in Protection,” *Journal of International Humanitarian Legal Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 97, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187815210X12766020139884>.

2. Social Effects

Disasters are not uniform in their socioeconomic repercussions. Abney and Hill found that disasters tend to exacerbate divisions that already exist in society, for example the alienation between the lower or working-class people worst-affected by a disaster and the middle-class organizations that dominate recovery efforts, or the resentment of the citizenry toward a political system that was already thought to be out of touch.⁷⁷ The interaction between socioeconomic status and disaster reaction feeds into the question of divergent responses to disaster warnings, meaning who stays and who leaves when the alarm goes off.

People with the most to lose in terms of stable housing and livelihoods—not overall material wealth—are the most likely to try to “ride out” an imminent threat. The National Research Council (NRC) concluded that a refusal to obey evacuation orders is explainable: generally those who stay behind either do not have the resources to escape, do not consider themselves truly at risk, or are too attached to their precarious living conditions to be able to give it up.⁷⁸ Disasters, they claim, magnify the difference between those vulnerable to economic loss and those without, producing “winners” and “losers” among those affected.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the NRC found the incidence of looting and violence in disaster situations has been much lower than assumed and portrayed by media narratives; in fact, most people respond to acute disaster conditions with prosocial (altruistic) behavior, not panic or hoarding.⁸⁰ However, longer-lasting events can lead to conflict, with social corrosion resulting from anxiety and trauma over time.⁸¹

⁷⁷ F. Glenn Abney and Larry B. Hill, “Natural Disasters as a Political Variable: The Effect of a Hurricane on an Urban Election,” *The American Political Science Review* 60, no. 4 (1966): 974, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1953770>.

⁷⁸ National Research Council, “Research on Disaster Response and Recovery,” in *Facing Hazards and Disasters: Understanding Human Dimensions* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2006), 130, <https://doi.org/10.17226/11671>.

⁷⁹ National Research Council, 162.

⁸⁰ National Research Council, 133–34.

⁸¹ National Research Council, 154.

Given that disasters have broadly different meanings for those who will be wiped out versus merely inconvenienced by them, making sense of their impact requires thinking about what elements of a disaster's effects are recognized by all. Quarantelli describes a disaster as a "consensus-type crisis," breaking it into three key elements: that there is a threat, it is unexpected, and there is an urgent need to act in order to avoid or survive this threat.⁸² He further asserts that "natural" disasters are misnamed, because the cumulative effect of human decisions prior to the event is what puts human livelihoods in harm's way; they are instead *social* occasions. What is important in assessing the disaster's relevance to the community, he argues, are such dimensions as proportion and position of the populations affected, length of the crisis response, unfamiliarity, predictability, and depth of involvement.⁸³

Similarly, Oliver-Smith provides a typology for comparing human responses to disaster events across a handful of social dimensions. He notes that disasters vary widely in their effects and suggests six continua along which one can categorize large-scale population responses. In this rubric, a disaster response can be categorized as:

- **Proactive** (anticipatory) or **reactive** (in response to acute conditions);
- **Voluntary** (the migrants can choose to move or stay put) or **forced** (such that survival necessitates moving);
- Involving **physical** or **economic** danger;
- **Administrated** (directed or assisted by the government, as through a formal evacuation) or **nonadministrated** (up to individual responsibility to flee); and
- **Internal** (within one's own country) or **cross-border** (international).⁸⁴

⁸² E. L. Quarantelli, "Technological and Natural Disasters and Ecological Problems: Similarities and Differences in Planning for and Managing Them" (University of Delaware Disaster Research Center, 1993), 3, <http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/620>.

⁸³ Quarantelli, 18–23.

⁸⁴ Anthony Oliver-Smith, "Disasters and Large-Scale Population Dislocations: International and National Responses," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Natural Hazard Science*, ed. Anthony Oliver-Smith (Oxford University Press, 2018), 5–6, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199389407.013.224>.

The voluntary/forced and internal/cross-border continua are of particular importance in this discussion, as they underlie the how migration types are categorized in legal and social terms.

B. DISPLACEMENT AND PROTECTION

What distinguishes internal displacement from other migration types is the intersection of two circumstances Oliver-Smith listed: the jurisdictional setting (internal, not cross-border) and the volition or agency of the migrant (forced, not voluntary).⁸⁵ This section will examine those distinctions, then put internal displacement in the context of international law, and finally explore how the concepts of protection and citizenship apply for IDPs.

1. Jurisdiction

Migration within a country is qualitatively different from migration across international borders: in the latter case, the receiving country can draw on the principle of state sovereignty to set rules for who may enter and stay.⁸⁶ International migration is a formalized legal process which involves the crossing of a border; once in the receiving community, the immigrant is now a “foreign national,” distinct from the locals of the receiving community by customs practiced, language spoken, or passport held.⁸⁷ They are legally and often perceptually different from others in the community, as represented by the schematic in Figure 3.

⁸⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *The State of the World's Refugees: In Search of Solidarity* (Geneva: United Nations, 2012), 19, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5100fec32.html>.

⁸⁶ Migration crises, like the recent exoduses from Syria or Venezuela, are tests of state capacity: the immediate neighbors of a sending state do not have the luxury of considering the same options a more distant country would, but they can at least choose welcoming or hostile policies. Whether they can enforce those policies is the sticking-point.

⁸⁷ Note that “national” and “citizen” are necessarily distinct labels: nationality describes the external relationship (what international law and protection applies, particularly when one is outside one’s country) and citizenship describes the internal relationship (rights and duties) of a person to his or her own country. Rainer Bauböck, ed., *Migration and Citizenship: Legal Status, Rights and Political Participation*, IMISCOE Reports (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 17.

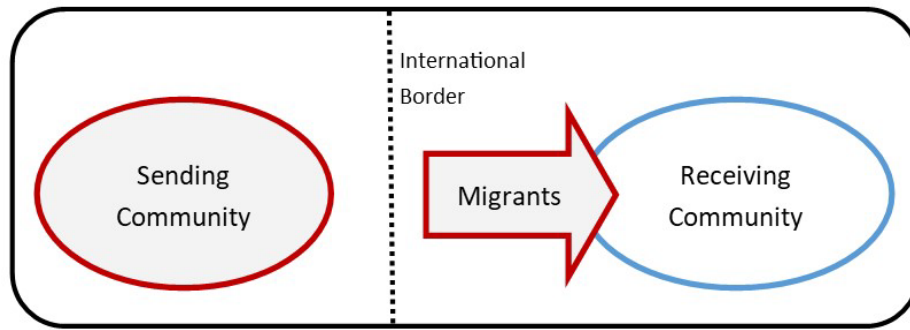


Figure 3. International Migration Schematic

In contradistinction to immigration, internal migration in developed democracies is not highly regulated. There are no visas to obtain for within-country travel, rarely any border controls to encounter, and no explicit quotas on which citizens can move where.⁸⁸ As a consequence, the participants in a non-disaster population shift may not even be aware they are part of a larger movement. For example, in Isabel Wilkerson’s *The Warmth of Other Suns*, she traces the history of the African-American “Great Migration” from roughly 1930 to 1970, during which millions moved from the U.S. South to cities across the North and West of the country. One of the repeated themes throughout many of her curated interviews with migrants was their curiosity regarding whether their personal relocation was considered part of the greater wave of people, even when they were moving at the peak of the tide.⁸⁹ Until recently, this internal movement had gone largely unstudied and unnamed, just an artifact of internal freedom of movement within the United States.

Domestic migration is thus a more fluid affair than immigration, much more difficult to measure or often even identify.⁹⁰ Accordingly, people who move from one

⁸⁸ As always, there are exceptions to the rule. California, for example, has agricultural inspection stations at its borders to mitigate against the introduction of pests that could damage the state’s farm production.

⁸⁹ Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2010), <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/190696/the-warmth-of-other-suns-by-isabel-wilkerson/>.

⁹⁰ Even moves within the same metropolitan area can involve crossing state lines (as in Kansas City, Chicago, or New York City), while a move from El Paso to Houston would cross multiple climate zones but remain inside the state of Texas.

place to another within their own country are legally and often perceptually unremarkable, and may just as well return to their previous residence with ease, as in Figure 4.

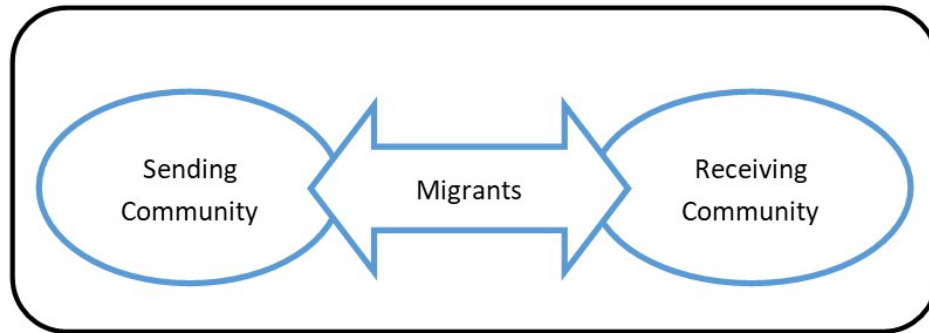


Figure 4. Domestic Migration Schematic

Particularly in the United States, where the homeland security apparatus is so heavily invested in the regulation of immigration and border security, the geographic and political border is reinforced by the clear delineation between those who relocate by crossing a border and those who do not.⁹¹

2. Volition

The second major distinction is what drives people to move, or whether their migration is *volitional*. Relocating for elective or voluntary reasons (seeking work, schooling, or a higher quality of life, what are called “pull” factors) is different, as Kunz enumerates, from forced migration (escaping persecution, conflict, or disaster, what are

⁹¹ Of the eight “component agencies” in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, three—USCIS, CBP, and ICE—are focused on immigration and border security, and a fourth—the U.S. Coast Guard—patrols the nation’s maritime borders. U.S. immigration law is “widely regarded as second only to tax law in its statutory complexity.” Joshua Daley Paulin, “Immigration Law 101,” American Bar Association, September 1, 2013, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/gpsolo/publications/gp_solo/2013/september_october/immigration_law_101/.

called “push” factors).⁹² These categories are frequently fuzzy, but can be named in broad terms, as in Table 2.

Table 2. Voluntary and Forced Migration Causes⁹³

Voluntary or “Pull” Factors	Forced or “Push” Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving to seek better economic opportunity • Moving to be closer to family or friends • Moving for temporary opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fleeing from persecution or conflict • Fleeing environmental disaster • Being moved due to development project

Maru builds on the voluntary-forced continuum, asserting that “there is no absolutely voluntary migration” due to the push and pull factors involved. Conversely, he also observes that even forced migrants have some degree of choice in how, when, or where they go, albeit sometimes a choice as narrow as whether to make an attempt to survive or not.⁹⁴ In this view, there is not necessarily a clear division between displacement-migration and the more general “mobility-migration” that encompasses the variety of situations where people move in search of a better life.⁹⁵ Cohen and Bradley agree, noting that migration in response to slow-onset disasters is increasingly being seen less as voluntary and more as forced.⁹⁶ Desertification, for example, does not have instantaneous effects but a failing water supply eventually makes living on parched land untenable.

⁹² E. F. Kunz, “The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement,” *International Migration Review* 7, no. 2 (June 1, 1973): 125–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019791837300700201>.

⁹³ Abstracted from Russell King, “Theories and Typologies of Migration: An Overview and a Primer” (working paper, Malmö University, 2012), 13, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260096281>.

⁹⁴ Mehari Taddele Maru, *The Kampala Convention and Its Contributions to International Law: Legal Analyses and Interpretations of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons* (The Hague: Eleven International Publishing, 2014), 43–44, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=1913346>.

⁹⁵ Maru, 48.

⁹⁶ Cohen and Bradley, “Disasters and Displacement,” 97.

Despite the uncertain division between voluntary and forced migration, Maru enumerates a set of categorical differences that distinguish displacement from mobility more generally: *cause* (an element of coercion), *experience* (a reduction in options), *vulnerability* (disrupted livelihoods), *victimization* (discrimination and exploitation), *reduced agency*, and *necessity* (a particular need for protection).⁹⁷ The presence of more of these markers—say, a family leaving home under state orders because their dwelling is unsafe, unable to go on living in that area without risking physical danger—is evidence of a clearer case of forced migration than one that does not have to contend with those concerns.

3. Displacement and International Law

The intersection of the two axes reviewed above—jurisdictional and volitional—provides four broad types of migration, although the dividing line between international/domestic types is much sharper than for voluntary/forced. The voluntary movement of people across international borders (position A in Table 3) is the traditional concept of immigration.

Table 3. General Schematic of Migration Types

		Volition	
		Voluntary/Elective	Forced
Jurisdiction	International	Traditional Immigration (A)	Humanitarian Immigration (B)
	Domestic	Mobility (C)	Internal Displacement (D)

People who move across international borders fleeing danger are collectively seen as humanitarian immigrants (B) seeking some form of refuge though they may not all be *refugees* under international law. On the domestic front, the choice to move to a new

⁹⁷ Maru, *The Kampala Convention and Its Contributions to International Law*, 50.

community can be described simply as mobility (C) as Maru suggests. Finally, movement within one's country to flee danger is internal displacement (D).

In addition to jurisdiction and volition, there is a contrast between the nature of migration within the wealthier, developed world (including the United States) and less-developed countries. Globally, 99 percent of people in protracted displacement live in low and middle-income countries; as such, the vast majority of literature focuses on displacement in a developing context.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, the prospect of large-scale destructive events in even the wealthiest countries means the concepts and conclusions of the literature are often universal. Oliver-Smith argues that displacement subjects victims to a "second disaster" by introducing further stresses and obstacles to recovery.⁹⁹ Meyer notes that these obstacles can be devastating to already-disadvantaged groups, being simultaneously forced to confront housing instability, unemployment, reduced health care, and marginalization.¹⁰⁰ This marginalization of displaced people economically, socially, and culturally after resettlement compounds any previous vulnerabilities they may have suffered and contributes to the likelihood that they may not fully reintegrate in society until the second generation.¹⁰¹

While it is tempting to think of IDPs as "domestic refugees," these categories are legally quite different. The term *refugee* is narrowly defined in U.S. and international law, being predicated on the migrant having crossed an international border and demonstrating

⁹⁸ Cindy Huang and Jimmy Graham, "Where Do Internally Displaced People Live and What Does That Mean for Their Economic Integration?" CGD Notes (Center for Global Development), accessed November 16, 2019, <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/where-do-internally-displaced-people-live-and-what-does-mean-their-economic-integration>.

⁹⁹ Oliver-Smith, "Disasters and Large-Scale Population Dislocations," 10.

¹⁰⁰ Michelle Meyer, "Internal Environmental Displacement: A Growing Challenge to the United States Welfare State," *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* 3, no. 2 (February 20, 2013): 330.

¹⁰¹ Jörn Birkmann et al., "Dynamics of Vulnerability: Relocation in the Context of Natural Hazards and Disasters," in *Measuring Vulnerability to Natural Hazards: Towards Disaster Resilient Societies*, ed. Jörn Birkmann, 2nd ed. (New York: United Nations University Press, 2013), 509, https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:2880/n9789280812022_text.pdf.

a “well-founded fear of persecution.”¹⁰² They are afforded specific rights, including the principle of *non-refoulement*, which bars nations from sending refugees back to locations in which they are at risk of persecution.¹⁰³ In contrast, the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement recognize all types of domestic forced migration as internal displacement, even if only displacement due to disasters is common in developed nations. (See Table 4.)

Table 4. Refugee and IDP Definitions in International Law and Principle¹⁰⁴

“Push” Factor Category	Refugee	IDP
Fleeing from particular persecution	X	X
Fleeing from general conflict or violence ¹⁰⁵		X
Fleeing environmental disaster ¹⁰⁶		X
Moved due to development project		X

Due to the principle of state sovereignty—which holds that independent nations have the ultimate say over their internal affairs—the IDP-protection regime is much less

¹⁰² United Nations General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, vol. 189, Treaty Series (New York: United Nations, 1951), 14, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/3b66c2aa10.pdf>.

¹⁰³ United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “The Principle of Non-Refoulement under International Human Rights Law,” accessed February 12, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/GlobalCompactMigration/ThePrincipleNon-RefoulementUnderInternationalHumanRightsLaw.pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ United Nations General Assembly, *1951 Refugee Convention* and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

¹⁰⁵ Some nations in Africa and Latin America have expanded their definition of “refugees” to include all people fleeing violence, but this is a variance from the worldwide standard. E. Mooney, “The Concept of Internal Displacement and the Case for Internally Displaced Persons as a Category of Concern,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (January 1, 2005): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdi049>.

¹⁰⁶ In common parlance, terms such as “environmental” or “climate” refugee have become common, but the international community is only now beginning to consider codifying the idea into law. Rob Picheta, “Climate Refugees Cannot Be Sent Back Home, United Nations Rules in Landmark Decision,” CNN, January 20, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/20/world/climate-refugees-unhcr-ruling-scli-intl/index.html>.

structured than the refugee-protection regime, which has nearly a century of laws and agreements codifying countries' duties and obligations.¹⁰⁷ The United States, for example, has a permanent Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the Department of Health and Human Services, which coordinates with a cadre of nonprofit agencies to place and provide for the adaptation of selected refugees into American society. In contrast, the U.S. government recognizes the *utility* of the UN's Guiding Principles, but only with regard to assisting other countries through the Agency for International Development (USAID).¹⁰⁸ There is still widespread reticence on the part of the U.S. government to recognize Americans as IDPs, preferring instead to say "disaster victims," "evacuees," and even (colloquially) "refugees."¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the government may shun the idea of recognizing IDPs altogether at the prospect of opening itself up to international observation.¹¹⁰

Despite this lack of legal structure for handling IDPs, there are a key set of actors invested in internal-displacement scenarios. This thesis contends that the four main parties with a stake in the situation are (1) the damaged or sending community as a whole, (2) the people who are displaced/evacuated and must seek shelter elsewhere, (3) the receiving or "host" communities where they are taken in, and (4) the government (local, state and federal), which responds to the first three parties' needs. (See Figure 5.)

¹⁰⁷ Maru, *The Kampala Convention and Its Contributions to International Law*, 92.

¹⁰⁸ According to policy, "USAID is the acknowledged lead U.S. Government agency for addressing internal population displacement." U.S. Agency for International Development, *USAID Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons Policy*, PD-ACA-558, 2004, 4, <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/200mbc.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ Cohen and Bradley, "Disasters and Displacement," 103.

¹¹⁰ This tracks with the Cohen and Bradley assertion regarding the U.S. aversion to classifying domestic migrants as IDPs. Interestingly, Oliver-Smith describes the U.S. post-disaster resettlement as "follow [ing] the refugee resettlement model" in that people are spread out to new communities for reintegration, rather than making any attempt to preserve pre-disaster community relationships. Oliver-Smith, "Disasters and Large-Scale Population Dislocations," 7.

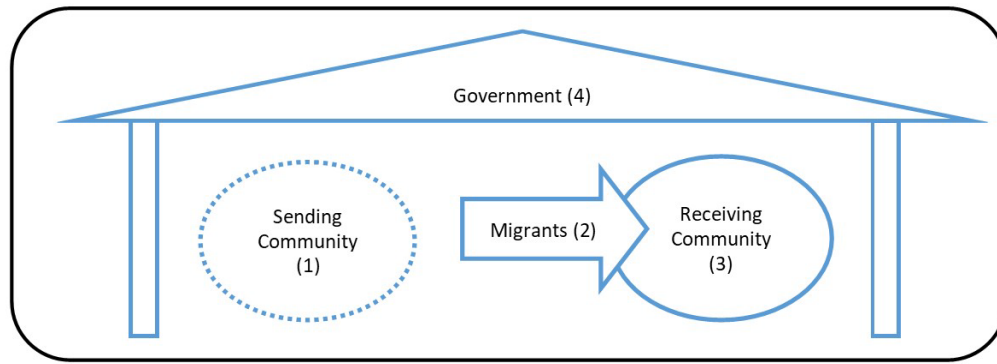


Figure 5. Internal Displacement Schematic

The relationships between these four groups are complex, yet recognizing and understanding how they interrelate is key to the successful implementation of durable solutions.¹¹¹ Absent the question of who is allowed in the country and for what reasons, these parties are obligated to at least confront the situation of displacement together.

Frequently, those who resettle elsewhere (the second group above) are those who had either lost everything or had few material possessions to begin with, requiring support that their receiving communities (the third group) might be either unable or reluctant to give. The migrants' vulnerability is compounded as the locals mobilize to declare their displeasure with the new arrivals, citing some form of threat to their community's way of life.¹¹² In some cases, this perceived threat to security has led to outbreaks of violent conflict. It follows that people who lose documentation, shelter, and other forms of personal security are especially vulnerable to exploitation and are noted to require, under the Guiding Principles, dedicated protection by the state.¹¹³ Without the state's overt

¹¹¹ The United Nations uses the term "durable solutions" to denote situations when migrants are no longer dependent on government support and protection related to discrimination or other vulnerabilities related to their displacement. Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2010), 5, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/iasc-framework-on-durable-solutions-for-internally-displaced-persons-2/>.

¹¹² Robert A. McLeman and Lori M. Hunter, "Migration in the Context of Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change: Insights from Analogues," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 1, no. 3 (May 2010): 450–61, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.51>.

¹¹³ Cohen and Bradley, "Disasters and Displacement," 100.

commitment to ensuring the displaced have such protection, they are at risk of being viewed as outsiders subject to threats, discrimination, and even violence in their new homes. What this mandate covers in practical terms, however, has been a topic of debate for decades.

4. Citizenship, Protection and Conflict

The concept of *state protection* is central to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Though IDPs are by definition distinct from refugees, and “protection” in the convention is implicitly the absence of persecution, the concept is at the core of both the refugee and displaced-person experiences. There have been attempts in the literature to close in on a positive definition of protection: Birnie and Welsh note that in the UN context, there is broad support for endorsing “responsibility to protect” when limited to preventing clear violations like genocide, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing; the principle of sovereignty makes it difficult to advocate for murkier rights like internal freedom of movement, even if they are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹¹⁴ Orchard considers the state’s role in protection for IDPs in terms of legislative action and resource delivery, though oftentimes commitments do not go beyond public-relations maneuvers.¹¹⁵

Protection is thus a loose analog for citizenship, in the sense of having a government that will recognize an individual as one of its own. O’Sullivan contends that protection should be seen as the state’s “provision of physical security and safety” through an administrative government that recognizes the rule of law and “enables residents to exercise their rights.”¹¹⁶ Hathaway and Storey demonstrate how diffuse the idea of

¹¹⁴ Rutger Birnie and Jennifer Welsh, “Displacement, Protection and Responsibility: A Case for Safe Areas,” *Global Responsibility to Protect* 10, no. 3 (2018): 343–45, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1875984X-01003005>.

¹¹⁵ Phil Orchard, “Implementing a Global Internally Displaced Persons Protection Regime” (Oxford University Press, July 17, 2014), 14, <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198712787.001.0001/acprof-9780198712787-chapter-6>.

¹¹⁶ Maria O’Sullivan, “Acting the Part: Can Non-State Entities Provide Protection under International Refugee Law?” *International Journal of Refugee Law* 24, no. 1 (2012): 88, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/ees001>.

protection can be, expressed as anything from the state's responsibility in preventing persecution, to the vital support of civil society to the state in reducing vulnerabilities, to the availability of civil rights like freedom of movement within the country.¹¹⁷ The overlap between these notions forms the heart of the social contract in Western democracies, argue Papademetriou and Benton; in their view, political membership in the nation is expressed through social protection via the welfare state, even if the most recent anti-immigration backlash has in their words "diluted the idea of universal citizenship."¹¹⁸

Unsurprisingly, citizenship as a concept has not itself been stable over time. Maas recounts the historical development of the idea, drawing attention to "multiple categories and forms of citizenship within the jurisdiction of the same state"; he concludes it is a relatively modern concept to consider all citizens having equal political status.¹¹⁹ U.S. jurisprudence, he adds, has also contended with the complexity of the federal system, with the 14th Amendment referencing both "a citizenship of the United States, and a citizenship of a State."¹²⁰ Smith observes that multiple overlapping definitions remain in effect: the legal right to hold a passport, the entitlement to participate in the political process, and membership of a shared community.¹²¹ Citizenship will always be "differentiated," he claims, due to the realities of human development—small children do not have all the same capacities as adults, for example—and diversities of belief and creed, creating different

¹¹⁷ James C. Hathaway and Hugo Storey, "What Is the Meaning of State Protection in Refugee Law? A Debate," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 28, no. 3 (2016): 480–492, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/ew053>.

¹¹⁸ Demetrios G. Papademetriou and Meghan Benton, *Rebuilding Community after Crisis: Striking a New Social Contract for Diverse Societies*, Council Statement, Meeting of the Transatlantic Council on Migration, 20th Plenary Meeting (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2020), 5, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/rebuilding-community-after-crisis-transatlantic-council-statement>.

¹¹⁹ Willem Maas, "Equality and the Free Movement of People: Citizenship and Internal Migration," in *Democratic Citizenship and the Free Movement of People*, ed. Willem Maas (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2013), 14, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=1459287>.

¹²⁰ Maas, 21. Note that the text of Section 1 of the 14th Amendment refers to citizens as "citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."

¹²¹ Rogers M. Smith, "The Questions Facing Citizenship in the Twenty-First Century," in *The Meaning of Citizenship*, by Richard Marback et al. (Wayne State University Press, 2015), 12–13, <http://muse.jhu.edu/book/46123/>.

“bundles of rights and duties” relative to one’s identity.¹²² In a separate account, however, Smith conjures an underlying national narrative used to develop an American “political peoplehood” as a way to find identities that compel a nation toward a common goal.¹²³

Lister and Pia summarize three broad philosophies of citizenship: liberal, communitarian, and republican. Each of these is built around a relationship between the citizen and community. The *liberal* view, a tradition commonly associated with John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and John Rawls, asserts that citizenship is granted based on what one *has*, i.e., individual rights.¹²⁴ The *communitarian* or Hegelian view claims that citizenship arises from who one *is*, that is, a member of the community.¹²⁵ The *republican* view, with champions from Cicero to Niccolò Machiavelli to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, argues that citizenship develops from what one *does*, by participating constructively in society.¹²⁶

Bauböck drills into the dimensions of citizenship itself, noting that it represents not only (1) a political or legal status, but (2) a substrate for rights and duties attached to this status, and (3) associated perceptions about individuals, in the form of assumed “practices, dispositions, and identities” for people holding that citizenship.¹²⁷ The rights and duties under the second point are key, as the balance between them is the crux of the debate between the three main conceptions noted above. Bauböck also considers how migration affects communities, noting that citizenship may be treated as a “club good,” with

¹²² Smith, 16.

¹²³ Rogers M. Smith, *Political Peoplehood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 8–9, <https://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/P/bo21028410.html>.

¹²⁴ Michael Lister and Emily Pia, “Theories of Citizenship,” in *Citizenship in Contemporary Europe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 9–10, <https://edinburgh.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748633418.001.0001/upso-9780748633418-chapter-2>.

¹²⁵ Lister and Pia, 15–16.

¹²⁶ Lister and Pia, 22–23.

¹²⁷ Bauböck, *Migration and Citizenship: Legal Status, Rights and Political Participation*, 16.

newcomers only becoming beneficiaries if considered worthwhile for the club (here, the citizenry).¹²⁸

Many others have interrogated the status of internal freedom of movement as a settled right. For in-country migrants, Maas again observes that freedom of internal movement is frequently “a core right of citizenship” for democratic states, though this has never been absolute.¹²⁹ Wilhelm details the precedents for the establishment of a fundamental right to interstate travel, beginning with the Supreme Court decision in *United States v. Wheeler* in 1920 and continuing onward, though there is no strict textual basis in the Constitution.¹³⁰ At the same time, she notes, the right to *intrastate* movement is undefined, and specific groups ranging from minors under curfew to registered sex offenders are often carved out for limited rights from the populace at large.¹³¹ In the same vein, Rahnama marshals provocative examples from stop-and-frisk policies to anti-homelessness ordinances to argue that basic freedom of movement, as a public counterpart to the right to privacy, has in recent years been on the wane.¹³²

For all the attention paid to international migration—and particularly immigration to the United States, both voluntary and forced—there is practically no equivalent national conversation about internal mobility.¹³³ This is unsurprising, as the norm for internal freedom of movement is so well-established as to be nearly unspoken. Disaster displacement, however, provides a direct challenge to the American notion of equality of citizenship. Communities must balance their desire for self-preservation with the reality

¹²⁸ Bauböck, 20.

¹²⁹ Maas, “Equality and the Free Movement of People: Citizenship and Internal Migration,” 9.

¹³⁰ Kathryn E Wilhelm, “Freedom of Movement at a Standstill? Toward the Establishment of a Fundamental Right to Intrastate Travel,” *Boston University Law Review* 90, no. 6 (2010): 2465–67.

¹³¹ Wilhelm, 2481–86.

¹³² Kia Rahnama, “How We Lost the Right to Move Freely,” *Slate Magazine*, January 13, 2020, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2020/01/right-to-free-movement.html>.

¹³³ Apart from the decennial census and the resulting reapportionment of congressional representation among the states, there is rarely a non-disaster reason for internal demographic shifts to spark similar discourse.

that they exist within a larger polity, and that crises may ripple outward along with the people escaping them. The realities of limited resources, the vulnerabilities exposed by a sudden catastrophe, and the clash between the competing affinities of local and national citizenship may put people at odds with their neighbors. Without the protective mediation of a government to quell those tendencies, people originally accepted as a community's guests being later seen neither as visitors nor locals, but as a socially suspect imposition.¹³⁴ Historical experience demonstrates that under varying conditions the mismatch between local and national affiliations can manifest as either a constructive or a conflictual relationship.

¹³⁴ Roger Norum, "From Welcome to Well ... Come: The Mobilities, Temporalities and Geopolitics of Contemporary Hospitality—Commentary to Gill," *Fennia - International Journal of Geography* 196, no. 1 (2018): 113, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.11143/fennia.70403>.

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III. HISTORICAL CASE STUDY: DUST BOWL

This first case study, of the Dust Bowl migrants moving to California in the 1930s, is notable for a number of reasons: the Depression as a backdrop, the slow onset and broad area affected by the Southern Plains drought and foreclosure crisis, the tension between elements in California which sought cheap farm labor and those that feared a disruption of the distribution of political power in the state, and the extreme nativist sentiment in the state that engendered a Supreme Court decision declaring the certain right of Americans to enjoy freedom of movement throughout the country. This history throws into particularly sharp relief that the hierarchy of ways people identify as group members is quite situational. The migrants from the Southern Plains assumed their whiteness and American citizenship would allow them fair entry into California society, while the locals placed more primacy on regional, political, and other affiliations. In the absence of the state's own troubles, the conditions for both the Dust Bowl's victims to migrate west and the harsh reception they received could have turned out quite differently.

A. TIMELINE AND BACKGROUND

Before 1930, California would have appeared to be a natural place for rural migrants to resettle. It was an agricultural powerhouse with a long history of absorbing newcomers, and a seemingly insatiable need for labor. The twin crises of environmental disaster in the Midwest and market crash nationwide meant that the westward flow of people was stronger than ever just as California was overwhelmed by its own collapsing economy.¹³⁵ As the state panicked, more arrivals were an unwelcome shock.

1. Timeline

As a slow-onset disaster, the roots of the Dust Bowl and its resulting displacement were a decade-long cascade of events. Proximate and ultimate causes for the calamity carry back at least to the 1920s, while the wave of people abandoning the Southern Plains

¹³⁵ Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 191.

stretched through the 1930s, and the crisis phase of migrant absorption did not truly come to an end until the United States began to mobilize for entry into World War II.¹³⁶

- October 1929: The New York Stock Exchange crashes, partly due to farm overproduction driving down commodity prices, marking the beginning the Great Depression; farm foreclosures become commonplace
- 1930: Severe droughts begin in the Southern Plains
- 1930-33: Over 300,000 Mexican farmworkers repatriated from the United States in the initial years of the Depression, leading California farm owners to advertise in search of domestic labor
- 1932-33: Massive crop failure, dust storms more frequent across the Southern Plains region
- May 1933: As part of the New Deal, FDR signs the Federal Emergency Relief Act and Agricultural Adjustment Act to assist those affected by the Dust Bowl
- 1933: Unemployment reaches 30 percent in California; the state passes the Indigent Act, making it a crime to knowingly bring in destitute adults
- April 1935: The worst “black blizzard” occurs in the Southern Plains, with dust blocking out the sun and damaging infrastructure across the region

¹³⁶ This summary and the following timeline are drawn from: Robin A. Fanslow, “The Migrant Experience,” American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, April 6, 1998, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/todd-and-sonkin-migrant-workers-from-1940-to-1941/articles-and-essays/the-migrant-experience>; James N. Gregory, “The Dust Bowl Migration: Poverty Stories, Race Stories,” University of Washington, accessed December 23, 2019, <http://faculty.washington.edu/gregoryj/dust%20bowl%20migration.htm>; PBS, “Timeline: The Dust Bowl,” American Experience, accessed December 23, 2019, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/dust-bowl-surviving-dust-bowl/>; Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929–1939* (VNR AG, 1974); and Department of Geography, University of California, Berkeley, “New Deal Programs,” The Living New Deal, accessed September 27, 2019, <https://livingnewdeal.org/what-was-the-new-deal/programs/>.

- August 1935: LA *Herald-Express* publishes articles warning migrants to stay away
- February 1936: LAPD implements a “bum blockade,” turning people away at state ports of entry
- November 1941: *Edwards v. California* decided by Supreme Court, striking down California’s Indigent Act
- December 1941: Pearl Harbor is attacked; the U.S. government begins mobilizing for war.

2. Background

The Dust Bowl migration was not the result of a single event, but the cumulative effect of two gradual changes in the Southern Plains: to the west, a drought and windstorm that stripped the topsoil from farmland in Kansas, Colorado, and the Oklahoma panhandle; and to the east, mass layoffs from farm mechanization in Texas, eastern Oklahoma and Arkansas.¹³⁷ Though hard-hit in different ways, the working class in these communities were similarly left with few tenable survival options as the Great Depression wore on, and became part of the same exodus. Faced with the loss of their livelihoods, approximately two million people left the Southern Plains region in the 1930s, many with only what they could carry.¹³⁸ New Deal programs to mitigate economic hardship and assist people in their home communities meant that only the most desperate left for greener pastures.¹³⁹ The majority moved to neighboring states, but many moved west to start over, including 300,000 that decamped for California.¹⁴⁰ (See Figure 6.)

¹³⁷ Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (OUP USA, 1979), 61–62.

¹³⁸ See National Drought Mitigation Center, University of Nebraska, “The Dust Bowl,” accessed June 4, 2019, <https://drought.unl.edu/dustbowl/Home.aspx> and Robert A. McLeman et al., “What We Learned from the Dust Bowl: Lessons in Science, Policy, and Adaptation,” *Population and Environment* 35, no. 4 (2014): 434, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-013-0190-z>.

¹³⁹ Reuveny, “Ecomigration and Violent Conflict,” 8.

¹⁴⁰ Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 45.

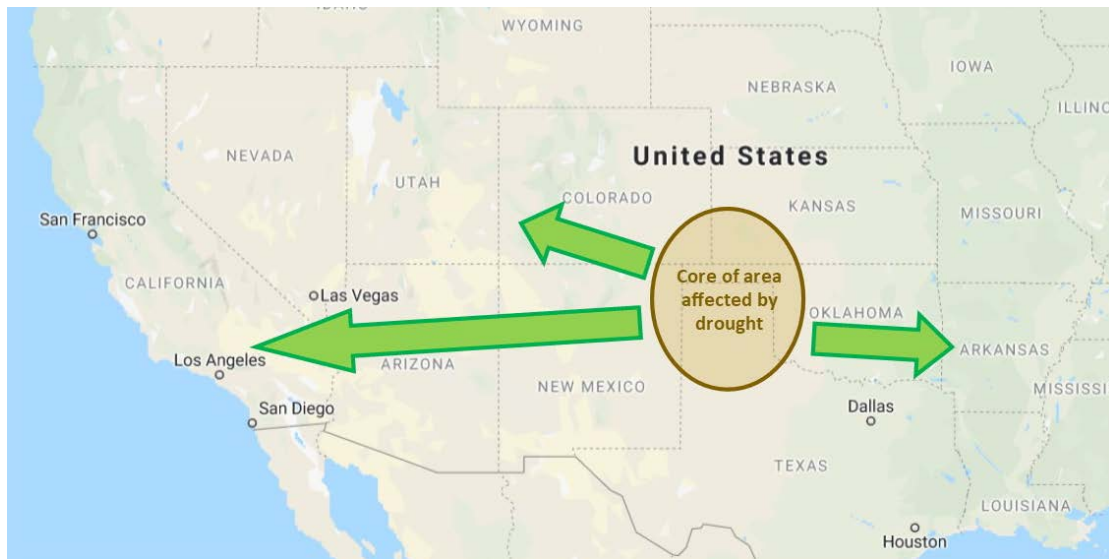


Figure 6. Primary Diasporic Routes from Dust Bowl Area¹⁴¹

The Golden State was no stranger to migration, with the rush to populate it having been in full swing for the previous 80 years. The 1850 Census counted fewer than 100,000 people in the new state, whereas the 1930 tally had risen to nearly 5.7 million—a sixty-fold increase, a dozen times faster than the nation as a whole.¹⁴² Over the decade of the 1930s, two out of every five people who moved between states in the entire country ended up in California.¹⁴³ Yet the arrival of the “Dust Bowl refugees,” “Okies,” or “exodusters,” as they were variously called, engendered a much stronger response than their numbers—roughly five percent of the resident population—would suggest. The backdrop of the Depression, and the widespread suffering and uncertainty that resulted from it was no doubt a major factor.

The reception of the Okies in receiving communities was varied, but most clearly divided between the urban coast and the more rural, agricultural inland parts of California.

¹⁴¹ Base image: United States map, Google Maps, accessed March 4, 2020, <https://www.google.com/maps/@37.7682306,-106.0184163,4.88z>.

¹⁴² U.S. Census Bureau, *Selected Historical Decennial Census Population and Housing Counts* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1996), 2–4, <https://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/pop1790-1990.html>.

¹⁴³ Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 50.

Largely this was due to differing capacities to absorb large numbers of arrivals: in the bustling cities, it was generally easier for Dust Bowl migrants to find a space for themselves and largely pass unnoticed.¹⁴⁴ By contrast, the more sparsely populated San Joaquin Valley was virtually upended by the influx, with some counties seeing their population grow by 50 percent during the 1930s.¹⁴⁵ The visible presence of the Okies in this region and the ongoing instability of the Great Depression combined to create conditions for a severe backlash from many host communities in California.

B. SOCIAL IMPACTS

The 1930s represented perhaps the nadir of California's reputation for welcoming new arrivals, as well as what could be considered to date a worst-case example for the displacement and reintegration of American citizens after an environmental disruption. A state that had only known growth and opportunity was suddenly confronting a collapse in property values, failing banks, and a dearth of stable jobs with livable wages. This blanket of uncertainty, coupled with the sudden in-migration of people from a worse-hit area, further destabilized the native population's sense of security and allowed an opening for powerful interests to turn the newcomers into a menace to be feared and an underclass to be exploited.

1. WHO: Farmworkers as Foreigners

The settlement patterns of the Dust Bowl migrants in California's Central Valley disrupted a stable, if unjust, "caste system" of settled, predominantly white communities in contrast with transitory farmhands from Asian and Mexican ethnic backgrounds.¹⁴⁶ The Okies were also white, but they came to rest in an unusual place in the local economy; unlike most domestic migrants, they were broke and unemployed when they arrived, and

¹⁴⁴ Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 72.

¹⁴⁵ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 82.

¹⁴⁶ At the time the Okies were arriving, much of the Mexican labor force had recently been forcibly vacated from the area. Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 56.

took positions in the labor force usually considered beneath the white locals.¹⁴⁷ Distinguished from the local majority by their regional accents and customs, their desperate circumstances, and their reliance on federal aid, the Okie outgroup—the “least fortunate segment of the privileged race”—was written off as “white trash” by the majority.¹⁴⁸ Rather than being seen by white Californians as co-ethnics, the Okies became “racialized” as an outgroup in the community’s minds based on their economic standing.¹⁴⁹

The immediate identification of the Okies as outsiders, different and segregated from the local white community, was clearly unfamiliar to domestic white migrants.¹⁵⁰ This loss of status was startling to the new arrivals: historian James Noble Gregory notes that as native-born white Protestant Americans, they were utterly unused to facing discrimination.¹⁵¹ It did not help, however, that in many places the Okies were resigned to settle outside small towns in areas called “ditch banks” where their woeful living conditions were laid out for the world to see.¹⁵² Worse, by setting up permanent camp and not moving on after harvest season, as previous waves of farmworkers had, they were guilty of what Gregory calls “not taking their winter problems elsewhere” and offering brutal evidence of new poverty in the state.¹⁵³ Despite the depth of the Depression that blanketed the whole nation, their presence as victims of it embarrassed the locals. At the same time, *due* to the Depression the locals were anxious about the prospect of providing for the newcomers’ well-being.

¹⁴⁷ Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 53.

¹⁴⁸ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 103–4.

¹⁴⁹ Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 60.

¹⁵⁰ Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 52.

¹⁵¹ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 115.

¹⁵² Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 48.

¹⁵³ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 86.

2. WHAT: The Shrinking Economic Pie and the Desperate Masses

Sociofunctional analysis posits that the types of reactions a community has to newcomers are keyed to the perceived threat they represent. In this view, competition for resources invites a hostile, aggressive response; physical threats—as to health or safety—create fear and an avoidance response; while what is called a *moral threat*, i.e., failing to do one's proper duty for the pathetic and unfortunate, lends itself to a pitying, supportive response.¹⁵⁴ Each of these relationships was demonstrated to some degree by California's host communities, with some sympathetic groups preaching tolerance, farm-area communities isolating the newcomers in squalor, and at its most extreme, urban leaders sending troops to physically blockade entrants from the state.

Much of the resentment from receiving communities was centered on the presumption that the newcomers' needs were bleeding public resources dry, with the California Citizens Association (CCA) bemoaning the state's bankruptcy and the "subsidizing of human misery" carried out "with utter disregard of the taxpayers who must pay the bill."¹⁵⁵ (The California congressional delegation took up a proposal in 1939 for special legislation to allow the resettlement or return of migrants to anywhere but in the Golden State.¹⁵⁶) The federal government, via the Resettlement Administration (RA) and Farm Security Administration (FSA), provided a year of temporary housing and other forms of relief for people displaced by the Dust Bowl.¹⁵⁷ However, after this transitional period, welfare and public services would have to be paid for by state and local funds.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ R. S. Abeywickrama, S. M. Laham, and D. L. Crone, "Immigration and Receiving Communities: The Utility of Threats and Emotions in Predicting Action Tendencies toward Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Economic Migrants," *Journal of Social Issues* 74, no. 4 (2018): 758, <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12297>.

¹⁵⁵ Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 100.

¹⁵⁶ Stein, 198.

¹⁵⁷ Robert A. McLeman and Lori M. Hunter, "Migration in the Context of Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change: Insights from Analogues," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 1, no. 3 (May 1, 2010): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.51>.

¹⁵⁸ Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 85.

In many communities, local taxes did rise as resources were forced to stretch and respond to the rapid growth in the dependent population: schools strained to fit all the new pupils, and at first, many Okies simply could not survive without public relief.¹⁵⁹ The increase in taxes was not such a simple relationship, as the state supplemented local public services and the new arrivals also paid into the tax coffers, but this was ignored in favor of the more outrageous and simpler story of the public burden they symbolized. Those that did work were willing to do so cheaply, both disrupting the previous wage structure and serving as a fertile recruitment ground for labor union activists.¹⁶⁰ The federal government even attracted ire for its role in facilitating the Okie migration, with the 1938 gubernatorial campaign being rocked by contentions that by assisting the newcomers, the New Deal was bankrupting the state.¹⁶¹ Campaign literature faulted the FSA's temporary aid for attracting poor workers to the state. As one political petition claimed, the resultant migration was suffocating the economy:

California now is giving daily support to 800,000 people in all forms of relief. We have four agricultural workers for every single available job... The influx of these people in such large numbers is destroying our wage structure, is periling industry, is laying a burden of confiscatory taxes upon our property, and is increasing unemployment and distress among our resident population.¹⁶²

Compounding the resentment stemming from resource competition was the very real public health and safety concerns the migrants presented. Typhoid and smallpox outbreaks were magnified by the lack of sanitary facilities in the hastily assembled camps.¹⁶³ Tuberculosis had been common in Oklahoma at the time and presented a similar threat of contagion.¹⁶⁴ As the migrants often had no choice but to live in segregated, ad

¹⁵⁹ Stein, 57, 83.

¹⁶⁰ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 84.

¹⁶¹ Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 98.

¹⁶² Stein, 197.

¹⁶³ Stein, 49.

¹⁶⁴ Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 59.

hoc housing in areas separate from the established town, their distance from the locals was a matter of course. This physical division further entrenched the economic disparity between the newcomers and their host communities: historically, segregation has ensured that the outgroup will have to contend with inferior facilities, higher risks to health and safety, and a lack of concern from policymakers about solving problems endemic to their segregated communities.¹⁶⁵ Perversely, these more negative outcomes in segregated communities were then used to justify their quarantine from society at-large, with even the Kern County Health Department referring to the dwellers of “suburban slums” as a “serious threat to the health and welfare of the county.”¹⁶⁶

Sympathetic responses took a few different forms, from ambivalent to crusading.¹⁶⁷ The popular works of novelist John Steinbeck and photographer Dorothea Lange, in particular, foregrounded the squalor and pitiful conditions of the Okies. Steinbeck’s stories of the fictional Joad family in *The Grapes of Wrath* and Lange’s real-life compositions with names like “Migrant Mother” and “Ditched, Stalled, and Stranded” provided sympathetic and human-scale views of the migrants’ struggles.¹⁶⁸ The more compassionate media outlets played up the “empathetic value of white skin” in the migrants’ privation, while the results of public opinion polls showed that those who were not openly resentful of the newcomers generally described their position as “tolerance.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Wark and Galliher, “Emory Bogardus and the Origins of the Social Distance Scale,” 384–86. Even today, neighborhood segregation contributes to disparate health care quality, risks to longevity, and socioeconomic disadvantages. See Andrew F. Beck et al., “The Color of Health: How Racism, Segregation, and Inequality Affect the Health and Well-Being of Preterm Infants and Their Families,” *Pediatric Research*, July 29, 2019, 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-019-0513-6>.

¹⁶⁶ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 86.

¹⁶⁷ For example, the *Bakersfield Californian* noted in one of its editorials that “a human government cannot permit [the Okies] to lack for food” and argued that it was a shared responsibility to provide for all residents regardless of their origin. Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 78.

¹⁶⁸ See Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother, Nipomo, California*, 1936, Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed February 13, 2020, https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/dorothea-lange-migrant-mother-nipomo-california-1936 and Dorothea Lange, *Ditched, Stalled and Stranded, San Joaquin Valley, California, 1935*, 1935, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, accessed February 13, 2020, <https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/81.74>.

¹⁶⁹ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 81, 101.

Apart from public-health and social workers, though, few in the greater community were willing to engage directly with the transplants.¹⁷⁰

3. HOW: A Frontal Assault on the Right to Remain

The range of insults hurled at the Okies for daring to resettle in California ranged from attacks on their innate characteristics to arguments that they represented an external invasion. High-profile figures like journalist and critic H.L. Mencken described their conditions as being the result of their own “congenital deficiency,” being only capable of “sponging and politicking,” and recommended mass sterilization.¹⁷¹ Local health officials in the San Joaquin Valley described them as “degraded American stock” from their time living in squalor, while the state chamber of commerce decried their “unmorality,” citing an assumption that they were too dumb to know what *immorality* was.¹⁷²

Even compassionate locals wondered if the Okies were dangerous, as groups led by the CCA continually spoke of the newcomers as “reliefers,” “freeloaders,” and “chiselers.”¹⁷³ Criminal activity was assumed to follow where the migrant population settled as well.¹⁷⁴ Working-age men were amusingly accused of both shiftlessness and of stealing jobs.¹⁷⁵ Schools were no better, with some districts classifying the Oklahoma accent as a speech defect and at least one school superintendent going on the record that his new pupils were universally “obstinate, rude, and lacking in respect.”¹⁷⁶ Newspapers stoked the flames by arguing that “immigration” from poorer states had to be prevented somehow, since the state was at risk of becoming “the nation’s dumping ground for

¹⁷⁰ Gregory, 87–88.

¹⁷¹ H. L. Mencken, “The Dole for Bogus Farmers,” *The American Mercury* 39 (December 1936): 404, 408.

¹⁷² Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 48, 102.

¹⁷³ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 87, 96.

¹⁷⁴ Gregory, 134.

¹⁷⁵ Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 62.

¹⁷⁶ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 130–34.

transient indigents” who would either linger on the dole or continue driving down wages.¹⁷⁷

These efforts to play up the Okies’ “foreignness” and threat to the community were made manifest in multiple attempts to simply seal them out. Bills to block “paupers and other undesirables” from entry failed to pass, but the state’s Indigent Act, enacted in 1933, made it a crime to bring impoverished persons into the state.¹⁷⁸ Most dramatically, calls to keep the Okies out led the chief of the Los Angeles Police Department to send volunteer officers to state ports of entry—hundreds of miles away—to man a “bum blockade” for two months in 1936.¹⁷⁹ Indigent people detained within the state were provided enough funds to obtain a ticket “back home.”¹⁸⁰ The accumulated efforts to turn people away at the state border led to a 1941 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Edwards v. California*, which declared in no uncertain terms that states had no right to interfere with U.S. citizens’ internal freedom of movement.¹⁸¹

In addition to the economic challenges exacerbated by the newcomers’ mere presence, the political sectors benefiting from the business-friendly balance of power were not eager to allow a surge of New Deal Democrats to upset the status quo. In particular, the Economy Bloc of factory-farm heavyweights in the San Joaquin Valley were concerned that their dominance of the local political machine would come to an end.¹⁸² Those Okies who did establish residency and gain the franchise were subjected to voter removal campaigns and challenges to the legality of their ballots at the polls, among other attempts

¹⁷⁷ Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 73–75.

¹⁷⁸ Francesca Paris, “What Migrants Displaced by the Dust Bowl and Climate Events Can Teach Us,” NPR Here and Now, October 20, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/20/659074873/what-migrants-displaced-by-the-dust-bowl-and-climate-events-can-teach-us>.

¹⁷⁹ Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 73.

¹⁸⁰ Cecilia Rasmussen, “LAPD Blocked Dust Bowl Migrants at State Borders,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 2003, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-mar-09-me-then9-story.html>.

¹⁸¹ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 99.

¹⁸² Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 88.

to simply prevent them from voting.¹⁸³ The *de jure* legal citizenship—the right to live anywhere in the country—of the Okies had been detached from a *de facto* social citizenship and the right of the migrants to exist in California was challenged at every turn.¹⁸⁴

The tenacity of the Okies in the face of not only the injury of displacement, but also the insult of Californians’ fear and hostility, is clear from the historical record. In the face of this indignity, most were determined to “stick it out” in their new home.¹⁸⁵ As summed up by one migrant woman interviewed by a Fresno newspaper, “This is a free country [and] we have every moral and legal right that you have.”¹⁸⁶ Despite having to endure a period of immiseration, disenfranchisement, and isolation from their neighbors, the Okie population eventually became “Californianized” and learned to pass as locals, with their descendants rising to prominence within valley communities.¹⁸⁷

4. Summary and Analysis

As a disaster, the Dust Bowl was characterized by extensive land area affected, a slow-onset crisis condition, and an ultimately voluntary displacement toward communities whose commercial interests had advertised the area as welcoming.¹⁸⁸ (See Table 5.)

¹⁸³ Stein, 95–96.

¹⁸⁴ Toni Alexander, “Citizenship Contested: The 1930s Domestic Migrant Experience in California’s San Joaquin Valley,” *Southeastern Geographer* 51, no. 1 (2011): 201–3.

¹⁸⁵ Stein, 64.

¹⁸⁶ Gregory, *American Exodus*, 115.

¹⁸⁷ Gregory, 121.

¹⁸⁸ “Voluntary” in the strictest sense, i.e., that staying in place in the Southern Plains was not tantamount to an immediate death sentence.

Table 5. Dust Bowl Emigrants in California

Element of Disaster / Displacement		Circumstances Particular to Situation
Disaster	Timing	Slow onset of disaster; extended displacement
	Geography	Large footprint of disaster, distant host communities
	Impact	Hundreds of thousands displaced due to uncertain economic future
Displacement and Reception	Evacuation	Self-organized, voluntary
	WHO: Evacuee-group markers	Regional culture, socioeconomic status, political affiliation
	WHAT: Inherent/situational challenges to peaceful resettling	Scale of displacement, visible poverty of evacuees, competition for scarce resources (financial assistance and employment, in context of Depression), disease
	HOW: Induced/deliberate challenges to peaceful resettling	State laws and policies (including physical blockade), editorial news, community-organization propaganda
	Outcomes	Isolation, disenfranchisement, exclusion, litigation to Supreme Court

Those who followed the call to move to the West Coast often found themselves resented, shunned, disenfranchised, or turned away. The social identity of the Okies was that of a clearly defined outgroup from California society, marked not by race, language, or nationality, but by regional origin, socioeconomic status, and implicitly by political affiliation. The locals' hostility, fear, and grudging tolerance of the newcomers arose from strained resource availability, perceived threats to health and safety, and the pitiful condition of the latter. With a protracted flow of migrants entering the state, local groups organized to both politically and physically impede further entry.

The competition for resources, both material and abstract, encompassed several sources of conflict for this displacement scenario. The Okies presented a real and symbolic threat to the locals on multiple fronts in this regard: competition with other unskilled farmworkers and laborers for low-wage jobs; competition with the population at-large for tax dollars in the form of "relief" (welfare), which could otherwise be spent on other

budgetary priorities); and an unwitting competition with the entrenched elites for political power, as their arrival upset the prevailing partisan balance in California. Groups from the press to the police to political partisans leveraged those emotional responses to scapegoat the migrants and push for their preferred policy solutions in attempts to consolidate the status quo ante.

IV. HISTORICAL CASE STUDY: HURRICANE KATRINA

Unlike the Dust Bowl, the experience of the Katrina victims was one in which a large portion of the populace had no agency to decide where they were going and when. The sudden, severe damage to a large geographic area, rendering it uninhabitable for an extended period, meant that the government-administrated evacuation depended on sending people to whatever communities had the capacity to take them in. The largest portion of the evacuees, both self-relocated and government-assisted, ended up in Texas, with a plurality in the Houston area.

A hostile reception toward the evacuees was overdetermined thanks to the government's chaotic and delayed evacuation, dumping traumatized citizens into communities already dealing with thorny local issues. The population shock was worsened by a disapproving, racialized coverage of storm survivors in New Orleans in the mass media. Widespread reports of lawlessness in the wake of the storm preceded the evacuees; this framing and the subsequent media focus on violent crime and the cost of support to the evacuees in receiving communities soured the local population on hosting them. The school-age evacuee population had a particularly turbulent first year, although displaced adults faced challenges in employment and housing discrimination as well. To this day, the effects of the Katrina evacuation are still being felt throughout the country, from the legislative—overhauling FEMA's responsibilities through the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006—to the deeply personal, in terms of the ongoing trauma and impaired self-sufficiency suffered by the survivors.¹⁸⁹ This chapter will recount how the victims of bad luck came to be seen as a bad omen for their hosts as well.

¹⁸⁹ See Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006, S. 3721, 109th Cong, 2nd sess. (July 25, 2006), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/senate-bill/3721> and Holly Bell, "Case Management with Displaced Survivors of Hurricane Katrina: A Case Study of One Host Community," *Journal of Social Service Research* 34, no. 3 (October 11, 2008): 18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01488370802085932>.

A. TIMELINE AND BACKGROUND

The advent of the cable-news era meant that daily and hourly coverage of major events could both inform and shift public opinion in real time. Only a week passed between the storm's landfall and the government-administered evacuation of the City of New Orleans, but information about conditions in the storm-struck areas began to coalesce almost immediately, priming the nation with lurid tales of looters and thuggery prior to the evacuation.¹⁹⁰

1. Timeline

The week following the storm set the tone for the popular view of the response as chaos, with media hype and government inaction creating an impression of the survivors and desperate and dangerous. When resettled in host communities, the newcomers were an easy scapegoat for stressed-out residents. It was not until years later that academics disproved the assumed link between the resettlement of evacuees and crime rates.

- August 29, 2005: Hurricane Katrina makes landfall in Louisiana and Mississippi
- August 30, 2005: Media begins reporting on looting in New Orleans and a terrified mass of people gathering at the Louisiana Superdome
- August 30-September 1, 2005: The city of Gretna, LA, blockades the Crescent City Connect, a bridge leading east out of New Orleans, turning back pedestrians and buses carrying people to safety

¹⁹⁰ This summary and the following timeline are drawn from: PBS Frontline, "14 Days - A Timeline," The Storm, November 22, 2005, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/storm/etc/cron.html>; Rivlin, *Katrina*; Stephen Klineberg, "Four Myths About Katrina's Impact On Houston," The Kinder Institute for Urban Research, August 26, 2015, <https://kinder.rice.edu/2015/08/26/four-myths-about-katrinass-impact-on-houston>; and Mónica Guzmán, "Houston, Louisiana Students Brawl at School," *Houston Chronicle*, December 8, 2005, <https://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Houston-Louisiana-students-brawl-at-school-1943254.php>.

- September 6, 2005: Due to unsanitary conditions from standing water, New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin orders a forced evacuation of the city
- September 21, 2005: The death toll from Katrina tops 1,000 people, making it the first environmental disaster to pass that mark since the 1920s
- September 2005: Over a million people are evacuated from the Gulf Coast to communities across the country, including 250,000 from Louisiana to Houston; 150,000 of them stay in the Houston Metro area
- September to December 2005: A dozen fights leading to arrests and hospitalizations take place between locals and evacuees at Houston area high schools
- Spring 2006: Politicians and redevelopment officials in New Orleans assert that some former residents “don’t need to come back”
- February 2006: Annual Houston Area Survey reports large majorities of city residents have a negative opinion of evacuees from New Orleans; in subsequent years, the resettlement itself is considered “a bad thing” by a majority of respondents
- 2010–2011: Studies published debunking the link between Katrina displacement and crime in receiving communities

2. Background

Hurricane Katrina superseded all previous environmental disasters in the United States in both its brute destructiveness and the total cost of the damage.¹⁹¹ The resultant need for the people in the affected area to find shelter else has been called “the largest America diaspora in history.”¹⁹² The 2005 storm displaced over a million people from the

¹⁹¹ Oliver-Smith, “Disasters and Large-Scale Population Dislocations,” 21.

¹⁹² Rivlin, *Katrina*, 186.

section of the Gulf Coast centering on New Orleans, with FEMA records showing evacuees spreading out over all 50 states.¹⁹³ The City of New Orleans, with nearly a half million residents prior to the storm, saw its population fall to just more than 200,000 people in 2006 and has only slowly rebounded to just under 400,000 in 2019, as habitable housing has become available and new residents have moved in.¹⁹⁴ Tens of thousands have remained displaced.

Part of the chaos that developed in the shadow of the storm was due to the vast number of people needing short-to-medium-term shelter. With the state of Louisiana in particular being overwhelmed, the decision by state and federal authorities to relocate people wherever they could be received meant that thousands of evacuees ended up on buses, trains, and flights traveling as far away as Colorado or South Carolina, with no knowledge of where they were going.¹⁹⁵ The most common destination for the evacuees—both voluntary and involuntary—was the neighboring state of Texas, with the Houston area alone receiving an estimated 250,000 people.¹⁹⁶ (See Figure 7.)

¹⁹³ Lynn Weber and Lori Peek, eds., *Displaced: Life in the Katrina Diaspora*, The Katrina Bookshelf (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 1–3, <https://utpress.utexas.edu/books/webdis>.

¹⁹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau American FactFinder (accessed October 2, 2019), <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

¹⁹⁵ S. Hrg. 110–487, “Host Communities: Analyzing the Role and Needs of Communities That Take in Disaster Evacuees in the Wake of Major Disasters and Catastrophes,” § U.S. Senate Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs (2007), 2, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110shrg40503/html/CHRG-110shrg40503.htm>.

¹⁹⁶ Christopher Dodd, “Memorandum: Review of Hurricane Katrina Activities, City of Houston, Texas” (DHS OIG, September 29, 2006), 2, https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/Mgmt/2006/OIG_GC-TX-06-58_Sep06.pdf.



Figure 7. Primary Diasporic Routes from Gulf Coast Area¹⁹⁷

In the interest of managing scope, this analysis will focus on the interaction between the displaced and those receiving communities in Texas.

B. SOCIAL IMPACTS

The Katrina diaspora is in large part the story of the disruption of a Gulf Coast community with a unique culture that had adapted to provide stability for a large low-income population. Conditions after the storm forced people to be relocated, at random, in a host of other places, creating a pair of related problems: increased economic insecurity for the displaced and a ratcheting-up of the receiving communities' ongoing resource concerns. These pressures, combined with a prejudicial media environment and a series of harsh good-riddance statements from those who remained in the sending community, worsened the recovery for many of the displaced.

1. WHO: A Precarious Enclave, Atomized

The displaced largely fell into two cohorts. First were those who left prior to the storm in response to the initial voluntary evacuation announcements.¹⁹⁸ These voluntary

¹⁹⁷ Base image: Gulf Coast map, Google Maps, accessed March 4, 2020, <https://www.google.com/maps/@31.7037009,-93.9869076,5.98z>.

¹⁹⁸ Oliver-Smith, "Disasters and Large-Scale Population Dislocations," 21.

evacuees were the majority, those who both trusted the government's warning and had the mobility and means to relocate ahead of time. Secondly—the focus here—were those who attempted to ride out the storm and later had to flee when their homes became uninhabitable.¹⁹⁹ Often they did not have the mobility options available to them to leave town and find their own shelter elsewhere or they were fearful about the security of their possessions once they left.²⁰⁰ Many eventually made their way to the New Orleans Superdome or its environs, where they waited days for coordinated evacuation from the city.

Once relocated, the evacuees were not only distinguished by their place of origin and by the status of being displaced persons, but demographically they stood out in the communities where they resettled. Those who had to evacuate reflected the overall demographics of the Gulf Coast region—approximately two-thirds white and one-third black.²⁰¹ The experiences of white and black evacuees was very different, though, reflecting housing-segregation trends in the New Orleans area; whites were much more likely to live on higher ground, evacuate the city prior to the storm, and return to habitable homes within three months of the evacuation.²⁰² Outside this black-white binary, approximately 15,000 Vietnamese-Americans from the Gulf Coast bypassed the emergency shelters and found housing directly within the Asian community in Houston.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ S. Hrg. 110–487, *Host Communities: Analyzing the Role and Needs of Communities That Take in Disaster Evacuees in the Wake of Major Disasters and Catastrophes*, 26.

²⁰⁰ As of the 2000 Census, the proportion of households without access to a vehicle in New Orleans was three times as high as for the nation as a whole. This disparity has declined as the resident population has changed. The Data Center, “Who Lives in New Orleans and Metro Parishes Now?” July 16, 2019, <https://www.datacenterresearch.org/data-resources/who-lives-in-new-orleans-now/>.

²⁰¹ Note that this discussion treats “black” and “African-American” synonymously. Deirdre M. Warren, “Constructing ‘the Other’: Media Representations of Katrina Evacuees in Houston, Texas,” *Race and Justice* 2, no. 2 (2012): 100, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2153368712438560>.

²⁰² Elizabeth Fussell, Narayan Sastry, and Mark VanLandingham, “Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Return Migration to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina,” *Population and Environment* 31, no. 1–3 (January 2010): 20–42, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-009-0092-2>.

²⁰³ Nearly a quarter of Houston-area Asian-American households polled in 2006 reported having evacuees staying with them. Klineberg, “Four Myths about Katrina’s Impact on Houston.”

In the end, the vast majority of the evacuees who ended up in shelters were African-American, with one of the shelters in Houston determining by survey that 93 percent of the evacuees there were black.²⁰⁴ In comparison, only 11 percent of Texans in 2005 were, in Census terms, “Black Non-Hispanic.”²⁰⁵ Houston, the largest city in the region with a 25 percent African-American population, would seem to be a natural place to integrate the evacuees; however, surveys of residents from 2006 to 2010 showed that majorities of both black and white residents considered the mass relocation “a bad thing,” with clear majorities citing crime impacts and strained resources.²⁰⁶ (See Figure 8.)

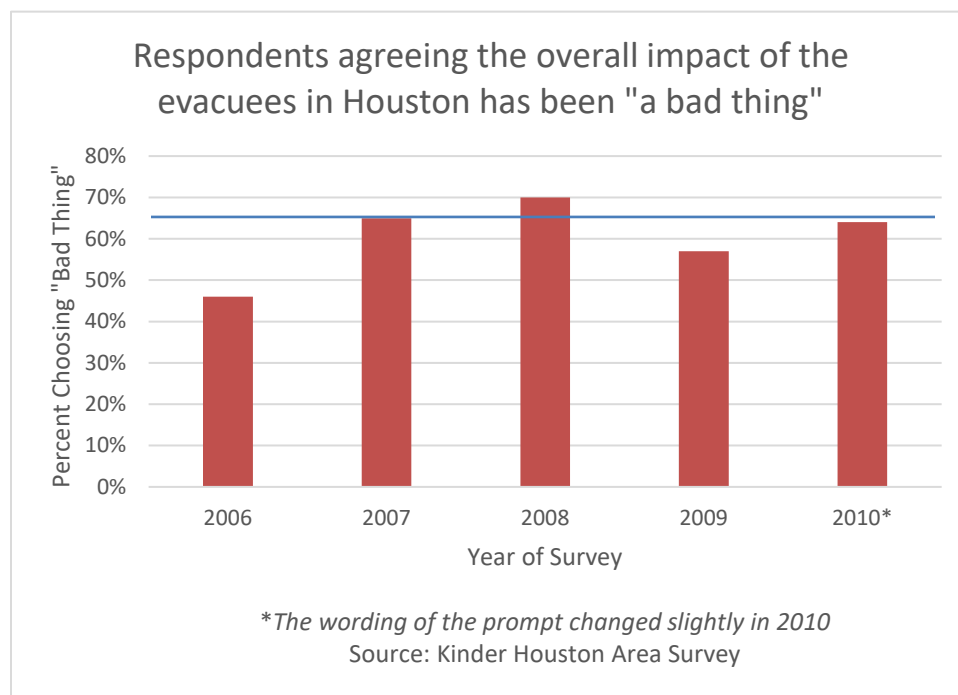


Figure 8. Kinder Houston Area Survey Results, 2006–2010

²⁰⁴ Rivlin, *Katrina*, 197.

²⁰⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, “State Intercensal Tables: 2000–2010,” accessed October 4, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/intercensal-2000-2010-state.html>.

²⁰⁶ Warren, “Color-Blind Racism in Post-Obama America,” 218. See also Kinder Institute for Urban Research, “The Houston Area Survey, Central Findings from Year 28,” May 2009, 3, https://issuu.com/kinderinstitute/docs/2009_houston_area_survey_highlights.

Particularly among teenagers, the cultural differences between black Houstonians and black New Orleanians was clear from their personal style preferences (particularly in clothing and hairstyles) as well as the regional slang they used.²⁰⁷

Socioeconomically, the evacuee population was already poorer than average, which was exacerbated by the immiserating disaster experience. One study found that their median income was \$15,000 a year, and though two thirds of the evacuees in Houston had been jobholders at the time of the flood, 68 percent “had neither cash in the bank nor a usable credit card.”²⁰⁸ Another reported that the majority of those who were evacuated to Austin met their income entirely through earned wages, with no investments to speak of.²⁰⁹ Once in shelters, however, they were generally “perceived as government-supported ‘poor people’” by those they encountered.²¹⁰

2. WHAT: A Magnifying Glass to Host Communities’ Challenges

The experiences of the Katrina evacuees in their host communities followed a well-known arc in the process of recovery: a “honeymoon” period in which communities welcome the newcomers with open arms, until the endorphins wear off and the exacerbated challenges of the new normal take precedence.²¹¹ Writer Gary Rivlin notes there is an American mythos about disaster that “everyone pulls together regardless of the race or social standing of their neighbor.”²¹² While in many cases this has shown to be indeed

²⁰⁷ Thaddeus Herrick, “Teen Tension Trails Hurricane Evacuees into Houston School,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 2, 2005, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB113349151947412113>.

²⁰⁸ Rivlin, *Katrina*, 50.

²⁰⁹ Laura Lein et al., “The Basement of Extreme Poverty: Katrina Survivors and Poverty Programs,” in *Displaced: Life in the Katrina Diaspora*, ed. Lynn Weber and Lori Peek, The Katrina Bookshelf (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 48, <https://utpress.utexas.edu/books/webdis>.

²¹⁰ Lee M. Miller, “Katrina Evacuee Reception in Rural East Texas: Rethinking Disaster ‘Recovery,’” in *Displaced: Life in the Katrina Diaspora*, ed. Lynn Weber and Lori Peek, The Katrina Bookshelf (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 109, <https://utpress.utexas.edu/books/webdis>.

²¹¹ Deborah J. DeWolfe, *Training Manual for Mental Health and Human Service Workers in Major Disasters*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000), 15–22.

²¹² Rivlin, *Katrina*, 266.

wishful thinking, there were widespread initial outpourings of help commensurate with the enormity of the disaster and the pitiful condition of the evacuees, however short-lived.²¹³

When the high of the community effort began to wear off, more quotidian concerns came to the fore.²¹⁴ Due to their extreme need for support, often having no possessions in an unfamiliar location, the newcomers often leapfrogged the local population for access to social services; not only were long-term needy residents negatively affected by the competition, but providers were often already struggling to keep up with local demand.²¹⁵ Private donations to help the evacuees get back on their feet were fodder for resentment from struggling locals.²¹⁶ In wealthier communities like Austin and Denver, the problem became one not of competition for public resources, but for scarce low-cost housing.²¹⁷ It appears that virtually wherever people were relocated, the local community was not ready for the influx, and came to meet the efforts of the evacuees to reestablish themselves with a cocktail of “indifference, suspicion, and overt hostility.”²¹⁸ References to “those people” and “you people” peppered discussions from newcomers’ conduct to who would be allowed to rent apartments in certain areas.²¹⁹ One compilation of studies concluded that

racism and population segregation [patterns were] evident in Hurricane Katrina, after which [evacuees] recounted racial slurs, accusations of being undocumented immigrants and criminals, employment discrimination,

²¹³ Miller, “Katrina Evacuee Reception in Rural East Texas: Rethinking Disaster ‘Recovery,’” 105.

²¹⁴ “Because the public perceives disasters as temporary phenomena, displacees have short timeframes to return to ‘normal’ and the host community expects displacees to integrate or move back home quickly.” Meyer, “Internal Environmental Displacement,” 333.

²¹⁵ Lee M. Miller, “Receiving Communities and Persons Displaced by Hurricane Katrina,” in *Displaced: Life in the Katrina Diaspora*, ed. Lynn Weber and Lori Peek, The Katrina Bookshelf (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 25–29, <https://utpress.utexas.edu/books/webdis>.

²¹⁶ Herrick, “Teen Tension Trails Hurricane Evacuees into Houston School.”

²¹⁷ Lein et al., “The Basement of Extreme Poverty: Katrina Survivors and Poverty Programs,” 56.

²¹⁸ Miller, “Receiving Communities and Persons Displaced by Hurricane Katrina,” 27.

²¹⁹ Jessica W. Pardee, “Living through Displacement: Housing Insecurity among Low-Income Evacuees,” in *Displaced: Life in the Katrina Diaspora*, ed. Lynn Weber and Lori Peek, The Katrina Bookshelf (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 71, <https://utpress.utexas.edu/books/webdis>.

racial discrimination from private citizens offering assistance, and refusal of leasing agents to accept federally-funded assistance.²²⁰

As time progressed, locals' opinions regarding the evacuees' ongoing resource needs settled into a mix of resentment and incredulity. Fear of crime, social tension, and exhaustion of volunteer resources laid the groundwork for what was popularly called "Katrina fatigue," with the evacuees in some places even being referred to disparagingly as "Katricians."²²¹ Crime was a particular sore spot as the public perception of a Katrina-led crime wave developed quickly, despite retrospective evidence showing that changes to the crime rate in host communities were "neither widespread... nor pervasive."²²²

The integration of evacuee children into local schools also presents a mixed outcome; some thrived and flourished in the new environment, with some parents bragging about formerly hyperactive problem children now on the honor roll.²²³ In other cases, frustrations over the sudden arrival of evacuee students played out violently: animosities between the locals and newcomers manifested in numerous brawls at high schools in Houston, Dallas, and Austin, usually initiated by antagonism from local students over cultural differences or petty jealousies around items bought with disaster-survivor benefits.²²⁴

²²⁰ Meyer, "Internal Environmental Displacement," 333.

²²¹ Settles and Lindsay, "Crime in Post-Katrina Houston," 211.

²²² Data from Houston, San Antonio, and Phoenix, which all had sizeable populations of evacuees, did not demonstrate any consistent patterns confirming a general increase in violent crime. Sean P. Varano et al., "A Tale of Three Cities: Crime and Displacement after Hurricane Katrina," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 38, no. 1 (January 2010): 47, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2009.11.006>.

²²³ Rivlin, *Katrina*, 348.

²²⁴ Jennifer Radcliffe, "Tensions Overflow at Jones High School," *Houston Chronicle*, September 14, 2005, <https://www.chron.com/news/houston-weather/hurricanes/article/Tensions-overflow-at-Jones-High-School-1930334.php>; Renee C. Lee, "Security Boosted after Fight Erupts at Conroe School," *Houston Chronicle*, November 19, 2005, <https://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Security-boosted-after-fight-erupts-at-Conroe-1921628.php>; and Guzmán, "Houston, Louisiana Students Brawl at School."

3. HOW: Fear, Framing, and Frustration

Many voices contributed to the public stigmatization of the evacuees. The attitude of the authorities in the sending area toward those who evacuated betrayed a push-pull dynamic that would be repeated in the receiving communities. On one hand, the Housing Authority of New Orleans established an office in Houston to assist with transitions.²²⁵ The mayor, Ray Nagin, put up billboards in Houston for his re-election campaign, and the Louisiana Secretary of State established “satellite voting centers” for New Orleans evacuees near all the state’s borders, to encourage them to continue to engage in the city’s political life.²²⁶ On the flip side, the redevelopment commission openly stated “some communities shouldn’t come back” and that “pimps, drug dealers, crack addicts, and welfare queens” should not return to the city.²²⁷ Some evacuees stated they felt they were being “encouraged to not return.”²²⁸ These attitudes were reflected in New Orleans’s choice to not prioritize rebuilding public housing, which made it less likely that low-income renters would be able to return to the city.²²⁹

The Katrina diaspora also faced immediately hostile impressions in their new communities, given media portrayals of them as “marauding gangs” in the desperate early days after the storm.²³⁰ Tierney, Bevc, and Kuligowski noted in a review of news reporting from that early period that, in the absence of on-the-ground information, narratives about

²²⁵ Pardee, “Living through Displacement: Housing Insecurity among Low-Income Evacuees,” 70.

²²⁶ Rivlin, *Katrina*, 251.

²²⁷ Rivlin, 211, 252.

²²⁸ Weber and Peek, *Displaced: Life in the Katrina Diaspora*, 17. In a bitter irony, public meetings in Houston at the same time were full of protestors demanding the evacuees be sent back to Louisiana. Anne Marie Kilday, “Residents Urge White to Send Evacuees Home,” *Houston Chronicle*, August 31, 2006.

²²⁹ “The city’s biggest public housing developments—the Lafitte, the B.W. Cooper, the C.J. Peete, and the St. Bernard—were demolished after a 2007 vote by the New Orleans City Council and ultimately replaced with fewer units, with only a portion of those available to tenants who qualify for public housing.” Anitra D. Brown, “New Orleans’ Affordable Housing Crisis: How Did We Get Here?” *The New Orleans Tribune*, accessed February 14, 2020, <http://theneworleanstribune.com/new-orleans-affordable-housing-crisis/>.

²³⁰ Weber and Peek, *Displaced: Life in the Katrina Diaspora*, 14.

violent crime and civil unrest in flooded New Orleans quickly proliferated.²³¹ Stories of *anomic* behavior—an assumed breakdown in the post-disaster social order leading to looting and chaos—were prevalent in the weeks after the storm, despite retrospective evidence showing that community cohesion and prosocial behavior in the face of adversity were nearly universal.²³² This perspective, at a national scope, would naturally have primed receiving communities to be wary of the newcomers soon in their midst.

This treatment continued after the acute disaster phase in regional media. A study of the *Houston Chronicle*'s reporting and editorials on Katrina evacuees from August 2005 to August 2006 found that after an initial flurry of humanitarian pieces in the first two months, the preponderance of coverage in the newspaper was focused on criminal justice concerns and the burden the newcomers presented the community.²³³ This included both general stereotypes of the evacuees as a “lawless” people, brazenly engaging in both petty theft and unprovoked murder, and specific oversteps like publishing inflated numbers of probationers and parolees—i.e., criminals on the loose—from New Orleans that had reportedly escaped supervision in Texas.²³⁴

Further study of comparative attitudes in Baton Rouge and Houston toward the evacuees reveals stark differences: in the 2006 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey, Baton Rouge residents reported a lowered tolerance for spending on antipoverty efforts while Houstonians expressed a desire for higher anticrime spending.²³⁵ What is especially salient about this finding is that the trends in each city were more in line with

²³¹ Kathleen Tierney, Christine Bevc, and Erica Kuligowski, “Metaphors Matter: Disaster Myths, Media Frames, and Their Consequences in Hurricane Katrina,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 604, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 60–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716205285589>.

²³² Varano et al., “A Tale of Three Cities,” 44.

²³³ Warren, “Constructing ‘the Other’: Media Representations of Katrina Evacuees in Houston, Texas,” 101.

²³⁴ Settles and Lindsay, “Crime in Post-Katrina Houston,” 209, 215.

²³⁵ Daniel J. Hopkins, “Flooded Communities: Explaining Local Reactions to the Post-Katrina Migrants,” *Political Research Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (June 1, 2012): 444, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912911398050>.

media coverage of the evacuee populations than with the objective conditions in each city; Houston's crime rate did not change appreciably in the years after the hurricane and Baton Rouge took in a higher proportion of middle-class evacuees, yet the reporting of local TV and newspapers in each city tended to emphasize the opposite—increased peril in the former city, benefits fraud in the latter.²³⁶ These trends may have developed because of the availability of familiar frames: the local news outlets were keenly aware of the sorts of stories that engaged the local community's attention and tailored their focus to what would capture the local imagination in a time of great demographic change.²³⁷ Houston especially was dealing with an unplanned wave of police retirements being reported *prior to* the storm; this being in the public's eye at a time of great change undoubtedly made law enforcement a topic ripe for exploitation.²³⁸

Presented with these demonizing portraits of the newcomers, large majorities of surveyed Houstonians, black and white alike, claimed in 2006 that “a major increase in violent crime had occurred in Houston because of the evacuees.”²³⁹ Remarkably, reviews of crime trends from 2005 to 2007 showed no statistically significant difference between the periods before and after the storm in high-profile violent or property crimes in the local area.²⁴⁰ Nonetheless, evacuees across the state reported being referred to as “refugees,” or denied housing and jobs, due to the “contamination” of the Katrina label.²⁴¹ The combined efforts of the news media and of the government itself—local, state, and federal—created

²³⁶ Hopkins, 451–52.

²³⁷ Hopkins notes also that local elites were careful to not demonize the evacuees. Hopkins, 444.

²³⁸ Ryan Holeywell, “No, Katrina Evacuees Didn’t Cause a Houston Crime Wave,” *Houston Chronicle*, August 26, 2015, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/local/gray-matters/article/No-Katrina-evacuees-didn-t-cause-a-Houston-crime-6464524.php>.

²³⁹ Warren, “Color-Blind Racism in Post-Obama America,” 218.

²⁴⁰ Settles and Lindsay, “Crime in Post-Katrina Houston,” 208.

²⁴¹ Lein et al., “The Basement of Extreme Poverty: Katrina Survivors and Poverty Programs,” 58.

a moral panic environment that further stigmatized a group that had already suffered greatly just to get there.²⁴²

Communities and nonprofit workers assumed that after six months, the evacuees “should be moving toward recovery” in the form of employment and self-sufficiency in finding housing. The experts were dismayed to find that many did not come anywhere near these milestones.²⁴³ Newspaper editorials decried the “‘gimme’ attitude” of the evacuees.²⁴⁴ Even sympathetic locals commented that many of the evacuees were “not the best-organized” people and had a “different culture” than their own.²⁴⁵ *Contact theory*, the proposition that personal interaction with evacuees would be an important factor in generating empathy for them, was not in fact sufficient to overcome political frames of reference that locals held about welfare and dependency.²⁴⁶ For example, the mayor and police chief of Houston held a press conference in 2006 ostensibly to talk about public-safety resources, but—at the prompting of the crowd—included a statement from the mayor that the city is “not very tolerant of [evacuees who] haven’t found a job yet.”²⁴⁷

Researchers studying the evacuees noted that the circumstances around the diaspora—many were elderly or disabled, had had low incomes to begin with, were shuttled around a series of temporary housing solutions, and came from groups that historically suffered discrimination—negatively affected their propensity for resilience.²⁴⁸ Regardless of the cause of their inability to adjust, the evacuees were labeled “deadbeats”

²⁴² It is also notable that the state and local governments added to the panic by requiring background checks of all evacuees moving to some receiving communities, among other demands. Settles and Lindsay, “Crime in Post-Katrina Houston,” 201, 214–15.

²⁴³ Lein et al., “The Basement of Extreme Poverty: Katrina Survivors and Poverty Programs,” 55.

²⁴⁴ Warren, “Constructing ‘the Other’: Media Representations of Katrina Evacuees in Houston, Texas,” 106.

²⁴⁵ Miller, “Katrina Evacuee Reception in Rural East Texas: Rethinking Disaster ‘Recovery,’” 114.

²⁴⁶ Hopkins, “Flooded Communities,” 445–46.

²⁴⁷ Kilday, “Residents Urge White to Send Evacuees Home.”

²⁴⁸ Kelly Servick, “More than 12 Years after Hurricane Katrina, Scientists Are Learning What Makes Some Survivors More Resilient than Others,” *Science Magazine*, February 27, 2018, doi:10.1126/science.aat4459.

who had “worn out their welcome” and were blamed for a range of community ills.²⁴⁹ Ten years later, evacuee families continued to struggle to recover from their displacement, with 40 percent of children in unstable housing and a third being held back a year or more in school.²⁵⁰

4. Summary and Analysis

The large footprint of the storm-struck area and the physical danger of standing contaminated water in the storm’s aftermath dictated both that a large number of people would have to be evacuated rapidly and that many evacuees would have to be sent far from home to where there was capacity to receive them. (See Table 6)

Table 6. Hurricane Katrina Evacuees in Texas: A Summary

Element of Disaster / Displacement		Circumstances Particular to Situation
Disaster	Timing	Rapid onset of disaster, extended displacement
	Geography	Large footprint of disaster, distant host communities
	Impact	Hundreds of thousands displaced due to ongoing physical danger
Displacement and Reception	Evacuation	Administrated, involuntary
	Evacuee-group markers	Regional culture, race, socioeconomic status
	Inherent/situational challenges to peaceful resettling	Scale of displacement, trauma/vulnerability of evacuees, resource scarcity (public benefits, affordable housing), intergroup violence
	Induced/deliberate challenges to peaceful resettling	News reports focusing on crime, statements from community leaders in sending communities
	Outcomes	Economic hardship (difficulty finding employment and housing), harassment

²⁴⁹ Rivlin, *Katrina*, 253.

²⁵⁰ Lisa Wade, “The Devastating Effect Hurricane Katrina Had on Education,” *Pacific Standard*, June 14, 2017, <https://psmag.com/environment/the-devastating-effect-hurricane-katrina-had-on-education>.

The Katrina evacuees in Texas formed a clear social outgroup, defined by the suddenness of their arrival in mass numbers, their poverty and need for resources, the thorough media spotlight on their experiences prior to arriving, and often their racial, regional, and cultural background.

The communities into which they were relocated—urban and rural, wealthy and struggling—were often generous at first but were not easily able to absorb them and meet their needs, leading to competition and resentment.²⁵¹ Further hostility arose due to the perception that many evacuees seemed to make no effort to get “back on their feet,” even when circumstances dictated that they had little choice in the matter.²⁵² In parallel, media and government narratives played up the desperation and criminality of these disaster victims, creating narratives that these were undesirables to be feared and chased away.²⁵³ The points of contention for host communities was split: a frustration with the evacuees’ perceived drain on resources, a fear of reduced public safety, and in some cases a resentment of the government that had helped bring this trouble to their doorstep.

²⁵¹ This progression was observed by a FEMA employee who summarized it as “At first it was ‘Oh, poor you!’ But then after a while it became ‘You’re not going away, and I’ve got to pick up the cost.’” Peek, “They Call It ‘Katrina Fatigue’: Displaced Families and Discrimination in Colorado,” 35.

²⁵² Miller, “Katrina Evacuee Reception in Rural East Texas: Rethinking Disaster ‘Recovery,’” 116.

²⁵³ See Holeywell, “No, Katrina Evacuees Didn’t Cause a Houston Crime Wave”; Varano et al., “A Tale of Three Cities”; Settles and Lindsay, “Crime in Post-Katrina Houston.”

V. CONTEMPORARY CASE STUDY: CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

The displacement from California's recent wildfires presents a contrasting example to the Dust Bowl and Hurricane Katrina experiences. Ten of thousands of people in Paradise and Santa Rosa lost their homes in the fires of 2017–2018, yet they did not become a similarly reviled group of outsiders. Though the devastation is still fresh, and the complete picture is still coming into focus, there are some clear takeaways that can inform future policy planning. The majority of the population remained in the vicinity of their home community, even with the sharply reduced availability of affordable housing. In each case the overall community, though struggling to recover and facing compassion fatigue, has reacted not through overt conflict but by focusing on constructive policy solutions. These solutions have included negotiations with insurance companies to extend survivor benefits and fast-tracking “tiny homes” projects for the unhoused, a population that now includes a mixture of the previously homeless and those displaced-in-place by the fires.

The extant housing and homelessness crises in California mean that there was already a framework in place through which the disaster victims could be perceived. Whereas in the Katrina evacuation the displaced were slotted into a “criminal” or “deadbeat” framework, the wildfire victims either found housing—however precarious—leaving them indistinguishable from other locals or were added to the homeless population and subjected to the attendant privations. As in other circumstances, they had an extra measure of support due to their status as disaster survivors, but it does not appear they have engendered resentment from the community at-large as a result.

Overall, the wildfire survivors avoided being pigeonholed as a deprecated outgroup due partly to their demographics—most were young families or retirees, neither seen as particularly threatening—and partly due to their tendency to remain near their home communities. By staying near the area that had been devastated, they were embedded in communities that were keenly aware of the magnitude of the disaster, even if the lingering consequences are borne unhappily.

A. TIMELINE AND BACKGROUND

The question of major disaster in America's most populous state is not a matter of *whether* it may occur, but *how often*. As the "California Dream" continues to attract people from around the world, housing availability and affordability in urban cores are under increasing pressure; new residential construction is expanding into and abutting wilderness areas. In parallel, even long-established communities must contend with severe and erratic weather like drought, storms, and extreme temperatures, as well as the ever-present threat of seismic activity. The recent devastation from multiple wildfires demonstrated how interlinked these hazards were, as thousands of homes were destroyed and the survivors faced a dearth of housing and related resources in their decimated communities.

1. Timeline

In 2017 and 2018, communities across California lost thousands of housing units to fast-moving fires, with Santa Rosa (from the Tubbs Fire) and Paradise (from the Camp Fire) being the overall hardest-hit. These two fires are the focus of this review, with the most salient outcomes being the deepening housing crisis in rural and low-density areas, the potential culpability of the Pacific Gas & Electric utility company (PG&E), and the efforts to rebuild.²⁵⁴

- October 8, 2017: Tubbs Fire starts on Tubbs Lane in Calistoga and begins moving southwest
- October 31, 2017: Tubbs Fire is contained, after burning over 5,000 buildings in Santa Rosa

²⁵⁴ Summarized from Sharon Bernstein, "PG&E Files for Bankruptcy as California Wildfire Liabilities Loom," Reuters, January 29, 2019, <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/pg-e-corp-files-chapter-11-bankruptcy-protection-082001142--finance.html>; Kirk Siegler, "More Than 1,000 Families Still Searching For Homes 6 Months After The Camp Fire," NPR, May 8, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/05/08/721057281/more-than-1-000-families-still-searching-for-homes-6-months-after-the-camp-fire>; and Kevin Fagan, "North Bay Fires Fuel a Population Explosion in Homeless Camps," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 13, 2018, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/North-Bay-fires-fuel-a-population-explosion-in-12747951.php>.

- March 2018: News reports that many of those displaced by North Bay fires have moved to homeless encampments due to lack of housing
- November 8, 2018: Camp Fire starts on Camp Creek Road in rural Butte County and begins moving west
- November 25, 2018: Camp Fire is contained, after burning through 18,000 buildings in the City of Paradise
- January 2019: PG&E files for bankruptcy
- May 2019: News reports that over one thousand families displaced by Camp Fire still lack secure housing
- October 2019: State of California strikes deal with insurers to extend survivors' housing benefits
- December 2019: Santa Rosa grapples with the largest homeless encampment in county history

2. Background

The State of California has three features that make it particularly vulnerable to conflagration: a dry Mediterranean climate with a frequent drought cycle, 33 million acres of forest lands—a third of its total land area—and a resident population on track to top 40 million people.²⁵⁵ Despite its vast geographic size as the fourth-largest state in the Union, it has a higher population density than all but 10 others.²⁵⁶ In recent years, this has meant that the inevitable wildfires on and around these forestlands have consumed an increasing number of human habitations in the wildland-urban interface, or WUI. The Mendocino Complex (July 2018) was the largest in state history, at nearly 460,000 acres consumed,

²⁵⁵ University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, “California Forests,” accessed October 12, 2019, https://ucanr.edu/sites/forestry/California_forests.

²⁵⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, “2010 Census: Population Density Data,” accessed October 12, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2010/dec/density-data-text.html>.

and the Camp Fire (November 2018) was both the deadliest and most destructive, killing 86 people and burning nearly 19,000 structures.²⁵⁷ The previous largest and most destructive fires were respectively the Thomas (December 2017) and Tubbs (October 2017). Collectively, the California wildfires of 2017 and 2018 displaced up to one hundred thousand people from their homes.²⁵⁸

In the years 2017 and 2018, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) recorded more than 13,000 wildfires requiring dispatch, burning nearly 1.4 million acres of land.²⁵⁹ Of these, six destroyed more than 1,000 standing structures each. (See Table 7.)

²⁵⁷ Note that a “complex” refers to the aggregate effects of multiple contemporaneous fires in close proximity. California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection (Cal Fire), “Stats & Events,” accessed October 12, 2019, <https://fire.ca.gov/stats-events/>.

²⁵⁸ It is difficult to ascertain a reasonably precise estimate for the total number of people who lost their homes over this period, as many documents and news reports refer to temporary evacuations as “displacements.” The FEMA report of structures destroyed also includes commercial properties and freestanding auxiliary buildings, but is the best proxy available for households displaced.

²⁵⁹ California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection (Cal Fire), “Stats & Events.”

Table 7. California Wildfires Destroying over 1,000 Structures, 2017–2018²⁶⁰

Name	Date	Prominent Community Affected	Counties Affected (Region of State)	Size, in Acres	Destruction, by Number of Structures
Tubbs	Oct 2017	Santa Rosa	Napa & Sonoma (North)	36,807	5,636
Nuns ²⁶¹	Oct 2017	Glen Ellen/ East Santa Rosa	Sonoma (North)	54,382	1,355
Thomas	Dec 2017	Ventura	Ventura & Santa Barbara (South)	281,893	1,063
Carr	Jul 2018	Redding	Shasta & Trinity (North)	229,651	1,614
Camp	Nov 2018	Paradise	Butte (North)	153,336	18,804
Woolsey	Nov 2018	Malibu	Ventura (South)	96,949	1,643

The Tubbs and Camp fires, each of which destroyed more than 5,000 structures, caused the most visible displacements. Those two events, and the damage to the cities of Santa Rosa and Paradise, provide not only an ongoing recovery to document but also hints toward challenges that future firestorms may create.

The difference between the two communities underlines the universality of the outcomes from these events. Santa Rosa is a regional population and employment center, the largest city in the “wine country” of North San Francisco Bay at roughly 180,000 people in 2010. Paradise was a small rural/exurban community of 28,000 prior to the fire, adjacent to forests and near the college town of Chico, prized for its low cost of living and remoteness. (See Figure 9.)

²⁶⁰ California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection (Cal Fire). Note that the Mendocino Complex mentioned above is not listed here because it largely consumed uninhabited areas.

²⁶¹ The Nuns fires came to be known as part of the “Southern LNU Complex,” which also included the Atlas, Patrick, and Pressley fires as other branches. Karma Allen, Morgan Winsor, and Julia Jacobo, “At Least 31 Dead in Horrific California Wildfires, Hundreds Missing,” ABC News, October 13, 2017, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/31-dead-horrific-california-wildfires-hundreds-missing/story?id=50383162>.

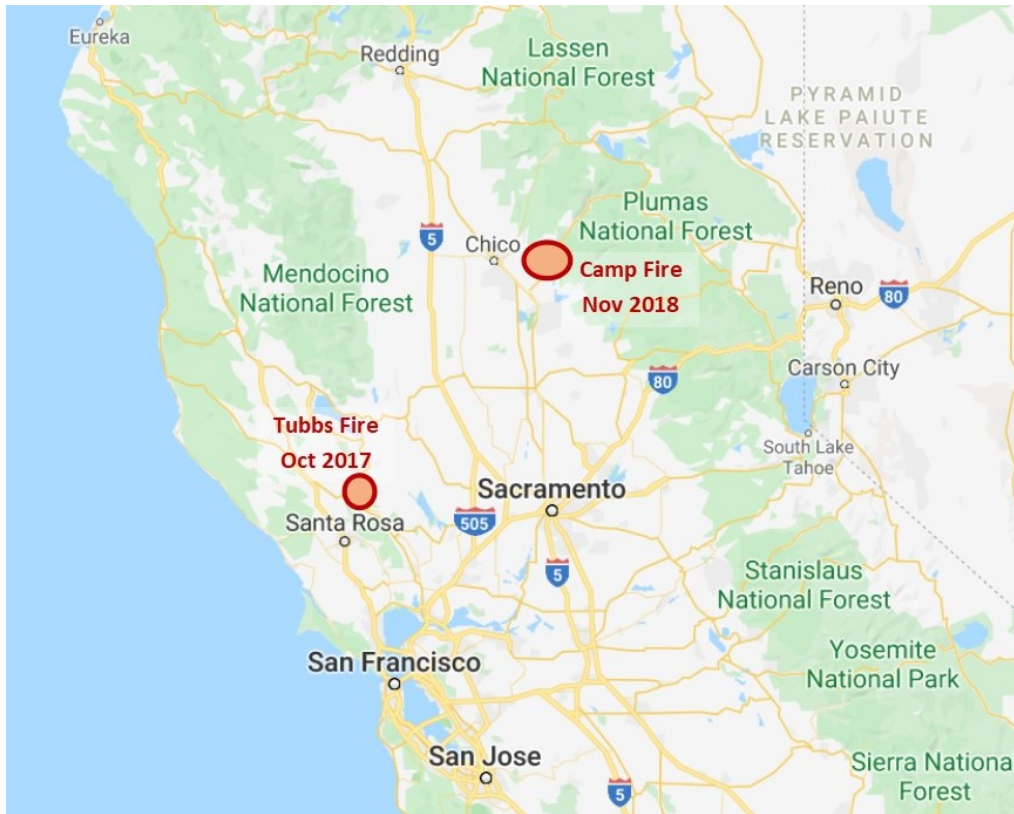


Figure 9. Locations of Tubbs and Camp Fires in Northern California²⁶²

Both, however, were confronted with a sudden population of displaced people—many of whom became homeless—and a scarcity of resources to adequately support them.²⁶³

The acute danger of a wildfire environment lasts for a few weeks at most and ends rapidly. Once the blaze is out, the air clears, and any evacuation order is lifted, survivors can return to or remain near their home. Following the fires, most people stayed near their old homes; a review of FEMA data from the Camp Fire found that of the roughly 23,000

²⁶² Base image: Northern California map, Google Maps, accessed March 4, 2020, <https://www.google.com/maps/@39.0918071,-122.495916,7.02z>.

²⁶³ Homelessness for this context may include people “living in temporary shelters or in cars, parks, tents, sidewalks or abandoned buildings.” Michele Chandler, “Updated Count Shows Homelessness Rose in Shasta County and the Carr Fire Affected Some,” *Redding Record Searchlight*, June 11, 2019, <https://www.redding.com/story/news/2019/06/11/annual-count-helps-identify-some-origins-homelessness/1409772001/>.

households that applied for assistance, roughly 72 percent stayed in Butte County and only about 4 percent relocated out of the state.²⁶⁴ A further analysis of USPS change-of-address requests by researchers at California State University, Chico, found that there was a clear stratification of displacement by age and household income, with both older and poorer demographics being more likely to move outside a 30-mile radius of the fire zone.²⁶⁵ (See Figures 10 and 11.)

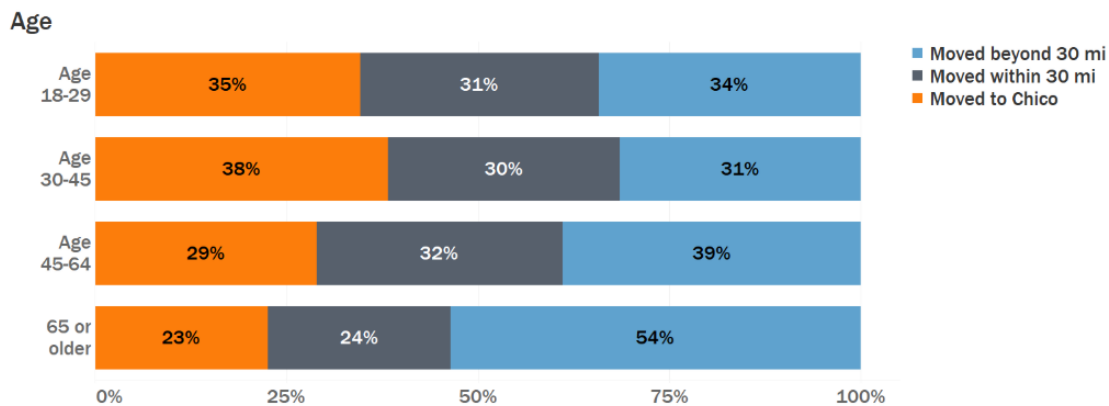


Figure 10. CSU-Chico Analysis of Camp Fire Displacements by Age²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Risa Johnson, “Map: See Where Camp Fire Evacuees Have Moved across the Country,” *Chico Enterprise-Record*, April 2, 2019, <http://www.chicoer.com/see-where-camp-fire-evacuees-have-moved-in-this-interactive-map>.

²⁶⁵ Note that this analysis was only able to track about a third of the displaced, specifically those who made the effort to reregister for postal service. Peter Hansen, “Mapping a Displaced Population,” *Chico State Today* (blog), November 7, 2019, <https://today.csuchico.edu/mapping-a-displaced-population/>.

²⁶⁶ Hansen.

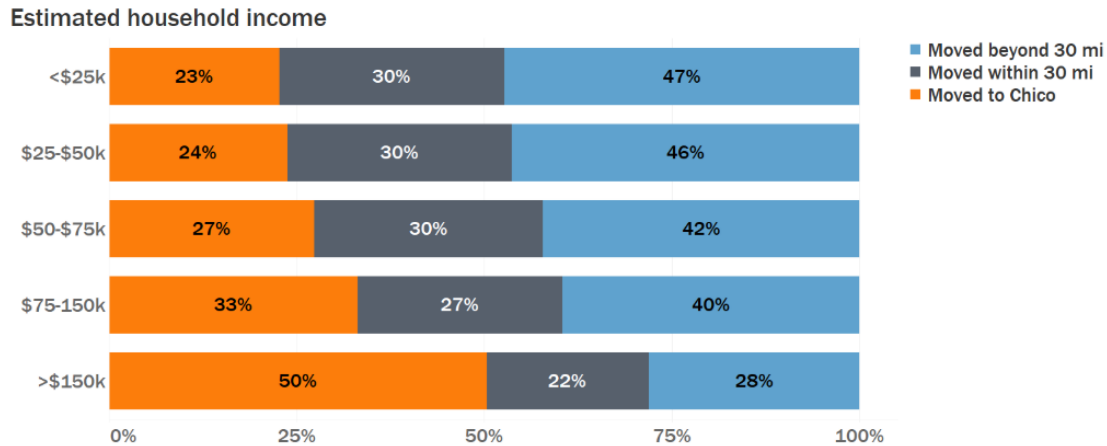


Figure 11. CSU-Chico Analysis of Camp Fire Displacements by Income²⁶⁷

This demographic pattern betrays a double-division: those *with* the material resources to do so were able to choose whether to stay in the community or go elsewhere; those *without* had to either leave the area and start over if they had the wherewithal, or stay and suffer the effects of the housing crisis. Of those that stayed, a majority moved from Paradise and environs to the nearby communities of Chico and Oroville, each of which grew by about 20 percent in the six months following the fire.²⁶⁸ In essence, these survivors were “displaced-in-place”: their physical homes were gone, but their area of residence remained roughly unchanged.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ Peter Hansen, “Mapping a Displaced Population,” *Chico State Today* (blog), November 7, 2019, <https://today.csuchico.edu/mapping-a-displaced-population/>.

²⁶⁸ Jeff Daniels, “Six Months after California’s Camp Fire, Survivors Still Struggle to Find Temporary Homes,” *CNBC*, May 16, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/05/16/six-months-after-camp-fire-survivors-struggle-to-find-temporary-homes.html>.

²⁶⁹ Note that this is a matter of nuance; while many people were able to stay within their home county, the difficulty of siting resources meant very few people were able to remain close enough to maintain their direct social supports as easily. Brandon Rittiman, “FEMA ‘Will Not Address All Housing Needs’ for Camp Fire Survivors,” *ABC10 (KXTV)*, March 15, 2019, <https://www.abc10.com/article/news/local/wildfire/fema-will-not-address-all-housing-needs-for-camp-fire-survivors/103-3a323e14-752e-4716-98eb-e7bfbf367120>.

B. SOCIAL IMPACTS

The importance of the community's direct experience with the disaster underlies a running theme in the case: the muted nature of conflict and lack of open hostility came from the shared experience of the event and the infeasibility of shrugging off subsequent concerns as someone else's problems.

1. WHO: Refugees at Home, Displaced-in-Place

With most of the people displaced by fire remaining in their previous local areas, the "outsider" label is not as easy to apply. The challenges accruing to survivors were stratified. Homeowners largely grappled with insurance gaps and the slow pace of the rebuild.²⁷⁰ Renters and those with low or fixed incomes often found themselves homeless or competing for a very limited supply of options. In some areas, the survivors mordantly labeled themselves the "burn-outs," but apart from the misfortune of losing their homes they were not demographically distinct from the rest of the community.²⁷¹

Paradise had been a lower-moderate income community of primarily homeowners, 90 percent white and tending toward "retirees living on fixed incomes or young families in search of safe and affordable housing."²⁷² Santa Rosa, a larger and more diverse community, lost 5 percent of its total housing stock and suffered displacement among both wealthy and poorer residents.²⁷³ In both communities the elderly were particularly hard-

²⁷⁰ Laura Newberry, "One Year after California's Most Devastating Wildfire, Santa Rosa Is a Patchwork of Loss and Renewal," *Los Angeles Times*, October 15, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-santa-rosa-rebuild-20181015-story.html>.

²⁷¹ Levine, "After a California Wildfire, New and Old Homeless Populations Collide."

²⁷² Umair Irfan, "California's Newly Homeless Fire Victims Face the State's Severe Housing Shortage," *Vox*, November 16, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2018/11/16/18098441/paradise-california-wildfire-housing>.

²⁷³ Bill Swindell, "'It's a Constant Drain': Fire Survivors Face Hardship as Insurers Stop Paying Expenses," *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, September 27, 2019, <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/business/10091205-181/north-bay-fire-survivors-face>.

hit, but not clearly defined as a separate class by the rest of the population.²⁷⁴ If there is anything that marks the displaced, it is the trauma of the experience and the disruption of social networks for those who scrambled to find housing wherever they could.²⁷⁵

Contrary to the experiences of evacuees forced to relocate away from their homes, wildfire survivors did not constitute an outgroup invading a wary community.²⁷⁶ If indeed a deprecated outgroup can be clearly identified, it is most likely PG&E, which is commonly faulted for its negligence of fire-mitigation activities. The displaced instead formed a new subgroup of the dispossessed among their nondisplaced neighbors. While they struggle to rebuild their lives and homes, survivors remain plugged into their communities via websites and social media forums to document their stories and connect people with resources.²⁷⁷ Those few who relocated elsewhere stayed with family or friends and were presumably too thinly spread a diaspora to make any strong impression as evacuees in their receiving communities.

2. WHAT: A Worsening Housing Crisis

The fires were not only devastating in their own right, but occurred within the context of California's affordable-housing crisis.²⁷⁸ While the Tubbs and Camp fires took place in communities far from the most expensive cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles, the displaced presented an immediate challenge to the capacity of local resources to assist

²⁷⁴ Alexandra S. Levine, "After a Wildfire, Rebuilding Life Can Be Hardest for the Oldest," *The New York Times*, November 25, 2018, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/25/us/california-wildfire-senior-shelter.html>.

²⁷⁵ Panchalay Chalermkraivuth, "'None of Us Will Ever Be the Same': Survivors of 2017 Tubbs Fire Face Long-Term Trauma," *The Sacramento Bee*, August 2, 2019, <https://www.sacbee.com/news/california/fires/article233034687.html>.

²⁷⁶ Colleen Hagerty, "The Survivors," *Vox*, October 16, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/10/16/20908291/camp-fire-wildfire-california-paradise-survivors>.

²⁷⁷ See "Camp Fire Survivors," Camp Fire Survivors, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://campfiresurvivors.com> and Facebook, "Paradise Fire Adopt a Family," accessed October 13, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/paradisefireadoptafamily>.

²⁷⁸ California is currently ranked 49th in the United States for number of housing units per capita. Irfan, "California's Newly Homeless Fire Victims Face the State's Severe Housing Shortage."

and absorb them, sparking fears of an acute humanitarian crisis.²⁷⁹ With limited options to meet the demand, rental housing prices rose rapidly and many struggled to find any form of shelter.²⁸⁰ Six months after the Camp Fire, more than 1,000 families were still reportedly seeking even temporary housing, many having moved multiple times in the interim.²⁸¹

The clearest battle for resources came from the competition of the “already homeless” and “newly homeless” to get access to social and material services.²⁸² Prior to the devastation, Butte County (including Paradise and Chico) had already hosted 2,000 homeless people.²⁸³ With the paucity of housing available apart from temporary shelters, many of the displaced resorted for the time being to live in tent cities in whatever parking lot they could find, sometimes adjacent to established homeless camps whose residents resented the disaster aid the newcomers received.²⁸⁴ Whether this friction even registered with the community at-large, however, is unclear; local media were more concerned with the overall effect of the homelessness crisis on the incidence of petty crime, the inconvenience of tent cities along thoroughfares, and the quandary of providing increased shelter in a community with a near-zero rental vacancy rate.²⁸⁵ More minor disagreements,

²⁷⁹ Sabalow et al., “Refugee Camps for Fire Survivors?”

²⁸⁰ Daniels, “Six Months after California’s Camp Fire, Survivors Still Struggle to Find Temporary Homes.”

²⁸¹ Siegler, “More Than 1,000 Families Still Searching.”

²⁸² Levine, “After a California Wildfire, New and Old Homeless Populations Collide.”

²⁸³ Eric Westervelt, “Tiny Homes for Homeless Get the Go-Ahead in the Wake of California’s Worst Wildfire,” *Morning Edition* (NPR, February 18, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/2019/02/18/694863105/tiny-homes-for-homeless-get-the-go-ahead-in-the-wake-of-californias-worst-wildfi>.

²⁸⁴ One observer of a dual-camp area described it as such: “You’ve got the parking lot, and then you’ve got the field [...] Money is the difference. Their needs [the newly displaced] are met; these needs [the long-term homeless] aren’t. These guys take their needs, these guys buy their needs.” Levine, “After a California Wildfire, New and Old Homeless Populations Collide.”

²⁸⁵ Kevin Fagan, “Santa Rosa Struggles with Biggest Homeless Camp in County History,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 16, 2019, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Santa-Rosa-struggles-with-biggest-homeless-camp-14906915.php>.

including price-gouging and harassment of RV-dwellers parked on local streets, have been noted.²⁸⁶

Another traditional vector for negative reactions would have been the norovirus outbreaks reported in two of the shelters for Camp Fire survivors.²⁸⁷ However, no major intervention was reported apart from the institution of standard public-health measures—handwashing, temporary quarantine—to minimize transmission. The rest of the community is not recorded as having reacted strongly at all; presumably the pity for locals newly without homes, many of whom were senior citizens with very limited resources, weighed more heavily than concern for contagion. Even within the homeless-camp context, the concern for disease and unsanitary conditions is still primarily expressed by the inhabitants of the camp, not their neighbors.²⁸⁸

3. HOW: Sympathy through Commonality

The public narrative has not included any noteworthy attempts to play up the fire victims as outsiders to stoke panic. This may be attributable to the displacement-in-place aspect of the disasters, with the survivors largely remaining embedded in or near their home communities. On the contrary, there have been a number of sympathetic news reports focusing on the difficulty of finding housing, the ongoing efforts to rebuild their communities, and the unexpected virtues of starting over with nothing but one's tattered

²⁸⁶ Siegler, "More Than 1,000 Families Still Searching."

²⁸⁷ Lindsey Bever, "They Evacuated to Escape the Deadly Camp Fire. Then Norovirus Invaded Their Shelter.," *Washington Post*, November 15, 2018, sec. Health, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2018/11/15/they-evacuated-escape-deadly-camp-fire-then-norovirus-invaded-their-shelter/>.

²⁸⁸ Fagan, "Santa Rosa Struggles with Biggest Homeless Camp in County History."

relationships.²⁸⁹ Notably, the *Santa Rosa Press-Democrat* won the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Reporting for a series of stories that sympathetically highlighted the plight of the survivors of the Tubbs Fire in 2017.²⁹⁰

In terms of public policy, the disaster in Butte County presented an unexpected opportunity to push forward more inclusive and experimental housing programs. A long-dormant “tiny home village for the homeless” proposal that had been previously opposed due to NIMBYism was given a jolt of energy by the sudden increase in shelter needs.²⁹¹ With the blessing of local officials, in 2019 a local nonprofit has moved forward with assembling and installing 200-square-foot units for both “newly” and “already” homeless households.²⁹² Similarly, in Sonoma County, a proposal to increase denser, transit-oriented homebuilding has been proposed after the tragedy as “a goal that’s largely shared [...] and that government intervention is needed to solve it.”²⁹³ On the whole, the aftermath of the fire presented something *opposite* to moral panic, a drawing-together of the community.

4. Summary and Analysis

The wildfire-survivor experience serves as an intriguing counterpoint to the other cases examined previously. Due to the localized scale of the disasters in Butte County

²⁸⁹ See for example: Daniels, “Six Months after California’s Camp Fire, Survivors Still Struggle to Find Temporary Homes.”; Arlene Martinez, “A Year after the Thomas Fire, There’s Still so Far to Go in Ventura,” *Ventura County Star*, December 2, 2018, <https://www.vcstar.com/story/news/local/communities/ventura/2018/12/02/thomas-fire-victims-california-wildfire-ventura/2081003002>; and Austin Murphy and Will Schmitt, “‘We’ve Gained so Much Emotionally’: Fire Survivors Forge Unexpected Friendships amid Loss, Grief,” *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, October 8, 2019, <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/10058630-181/how-survivors-forged-unexpected-friendships>.

²⁹⁰ “Staff of The Press Democrat, Santa Rosa, Calif.,” The Pulitzer Prizes, accessed October 23, 2019, <https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/staff-press-democrat>.

²⁹¹ Westervelt, “Tiny Homes for Homeless Get the Go-Ahead in the Wake of California’s Worst Wildfire.”

²⁹² Hagerty, “The Survivors.”

²⁹³ Alan Greenblatt, “After Wildfires, Housing Crisis Complicates California’s Rebuild,” *Governing*, April 2018, <https://www.governing.com/topics/transportation-infrastructure/gov-california-wildfires-homes-destroyed.html>.

(Paradise) and Sonoma County (Santa Rosa), and the lack of any organized efforts or motivation to relocate people, most survivors remained roughly displaced-in-place. While they were generally devastated *economically*, they did not end up as clearly identified *socially* as an outgroup. This in turn meant that there was very little conflict with the community at large, and that concerted efforts were made not to stigmatize them but instead to focus on community-wide improvements. The upshot of these events is summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. California Wildfire Displacement-in-Place Summary

Element of Disaster / Displacement		Circumstances Particular to Situation
Disaster	Timing	Rapid onset of disaster, extended displacement
	Geography	Small footprint of disaster, local host communities
	Impact	Tens of thousands displaced due to destroyed housing stock
Displacement and Reception	Evacuation	Temporary (during acute duration of fire)
	Evacuee-group markers	<i>n/a</i>
	Inherent/situational challenges to peaceful resettling	Scale of displacement, trauma/vulnerability of evacuees, housing scarcity
	Induced/deliberate challenges to peaceful resettling	<i>n/a</i>
	Outcomes	Homelessness crisis exacerbated, but community efforts focus on solving problem over stigmatizing

The outcome cannot however be said to be a positive one, but one that is less-bad than the alternatives. The displaced community was able to be absorbed by their social networks outside the local area or to remain in a nominally contiguous community jointly recovering from the disaster. The most negative outcome of the disaster, an exacerbated housing and homelessness crisis, was painful for the survivors but did not lead to a targeted or overtly antagonistic response on the part of the greater community.

VI. SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Both legitimate concerns and deliberately amplified fears can result in the collective outgroup stigmatization of internally displaced citizens, even within the United States. The aggregate picture of the preceding historical and contemporary analyses suggests a generalizable path from disaster through displacement to negative outcomes like overt conflict and segregation. This chapter begins with a comparative review of the disaster case studies, and then shows how they can be synthesized into a grounded theory of exogenous (given) and induced (human-caused) factors that determine the difference between normal domestic mobility and the phenomenon of internal displacement. It concludes with recommendations for communities to consider for mitigating factors that promote conflict and areas for further research.

A. COMPARATIVE REVIEW

This review summarizes the unique and shared aspects of the selected case studies in Chapters III through V. It looks first at the context of each case—namely, the disaster event and the main attributes of the displacement—and then turns to how the displaced population was received in the host communities. In the aggregate, these events show compelling evidence for an encompassing theory of disaster displacement and host community relations.

1. Disaster and Evacuation

The three case studies selected for this analysis were the products of very different types of events, from origin to onset to footprint. These events spurred varied displacement formats, from the self-organized interstate relocation of the Dust Bowl exodus to the government-administered evacuation from the New Orleans area to the short-term sheltering from the California wildfires ending with displacement-in-place. Table 9 draws from the disaster and response typologies laid out in Chapter II to visualize the comparison.

Table 9. A Typological Overview of Studied Disaster Displacements

Categories		Dust Bowl	Katrina	Wildfires
Disaster	Origin	Climatological (drought, windstorms)	Meteorological (storm, flooding)	Climatological (fires)
	Onset	Slow	Rapid	Rapid
	Impact	Degraded farmland & infrastructure	Flooded land & destroyed housing	Destroyed housing & infrastructure
	Footprint	Multistate area	Multistate area, including major urban area	Local/urban areas
Displacement	Volition (Type of Danger)	Voluntary (Economic)	Forced (Physical)	Forced (Physical)
	Duration of physical displacement	Permanent (Cyclical)	Permanent	Temporary
	Organization	Self-organized flight	Government-led evacuation	Self-organized flight
	Destination, by plurality	Interstate	Mixed Interstate/ Intrastate	Local

This background sets a baseline for the more pressing problem at the heart of this inquiry: What happens to those who find their lives upended by unexpected catastrophe, and how does their presence elsewhere potentially upend the status quo? The distinctive features of each of these disasters make it improper to generalize broadly about the implications for all displacement events, but there is value in noting where there are parallels. For example, the efforts by some elements in the State of California to prevent the “exodusters” from resettling there in the 1930s has echoes in the pandemonium around Hurricane Katrina seventy years later, when other communities tried to close bridges or turn away busloads of evacuees from the New Orleans area.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴ Rivlin, *Katrina*, 6–13.

2. Reception in the Host Community

The most salient factor in designating a place as a “host community” is that there be a noticeable volume of disaster victims present or arriving to reestablish themselves after being displaced from their homes.²⁹⁵ There is not always a clear line between mobility and displacement, however; some communities—like those in the western states currently adjusting to an influx of Californians looking for a lower cost of living—are already voicing their apprehension at the swelling ranks of newcomers independent of the prospect of receiving climate migrants.²⁹⁶

Nonetheless, in clear instances of disaster displacement like the case studies at issue here, the primary determinant of outgroup status for disaster victims is whether they are demographically distinct (including by race, socioeconomic status, or regional origin) from the community at large. The Okies in California stood out for their Plains-region accents and customs and visible poverty; the “Katricians” in Texas similarly were marked for their Louisiana Creole slang and culture, even among socioeconomic peers in the native Texan African-American community.²⁹⁷ The wildfire “burn-outs” present a different story: by largely opting to remain in their local area or having no prospects for moving elsewhere, they remained ensconced in a community that had been through the same disaster experience and maintained the survivor’s halo.

²⁹⁵ From the congressional testimony of a Houston-area judge in the wake of Katrina, “I do not think you can [...] designate a host community in advance because host communities come where people show up.” S. Hrg. 110–487, *Host Communities: Analyzing the Role and Needs of Communities That Take in Disaster Evacuees in the Wake of Major Disasters and Catastrophes*, 23.

²⁹⁶ See for example Jerry Brady, “Is Idaho Prepared for Climate Refugees from California?” *Idaho Statesman*, November 17, 2019, <https://www.idahostatesman.com/opinion/readers-opinion/article237278474.html>. In this newspaper editorial, a longtime Idahoan both echoes local concerns about wealthy Californians driving up real estate prices and traffic congestion, and looks forward with alarm to a potential future where disaster displacement forces an acceleration of the same ills.

²⁹⁷ Race is still very much a factor, though: there is little reporting that the Asian and white evacuees from the Gulf Coast in Texas were similarly marked as outsiders. For the Asian evacuees, it may be that they were largely first- and second-generation immigrants and able to blend in with the similarly peripheral community in Texas. White evacuees were much less likely to need shelters at all and to return home within a few months.

The intergroup dynamic in host communities is not static; in a sense, empathy is a wasting asset.²⁹⁸ As the Katrina experience exemplifies, when people are forced to relocate *en masse*, the evacuees are usually afforded a “honeymoon period” of goodwill. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has codified this pattern of large-scale domestic displacements: usually there is an initial outpouring of volunteerism in the host community, with time and resources donated to assist the evacuees through the acute crisis phase; however, this prosocial response has a short half-life.²⁹⁹ After a while, the displaced are often relegated to a stigmatized or resented class within their host communities before slowly or grudgingly being incorporated as locals.³⁰⁰

Often this resentment represents a pocketbook concern. All three cases yielded specific elements of resource competition between locals and newcomers, including tax monies for public benefits, employment opportunities, educational facilities, affordable housing, and even political power. One does not have to think long to imagine the potential strife over strained food supplies and water resources following a future calamitous event. To a lesser extent, such health and public safety concerns as evidence or assumptions that the displaced are bringing in disease and crime, was linked directly to displeasure and aversion in host communities.

Beyond these straightforward linkages, there are also induced drivers of conflict. At the more passive end of the scale is the application of existing negative *frames* to the displaced. In the Dust Bowl, the new arrivals were coming in to serve as replacements for migrant farmworkers, many of whom had been noncitizens who asked little more of the community than an opportunity to be paid a pittance for hard physical labor. The Katrina evacuees were easily slotted into race-based deadbeat or criminal frames. Those wildfire victims who could not secure housing for themselves were subsumed by the homelessness crisis frame.

²⁹⁸ In economics, a “wasting asset” is anything that loses value or depreciates over time.

²⁹⁹ DeWolfe, *Training Manual for Mental Health and Human Service Workers in Major Disasters*, 15–22.

³⁰⁰ The response to the wildfire-displaced groups indicates that this effect is lessened for locals remaining in their home area.

Along with the ease of unconsciously framing people as problems, the deliberate side of the scale comes into play with the deployment of moral panic. In both the Dust Bowl and the Katrina aftermath, civic leaders and media outlets made concerted efforts to tie the newcomers to the degradation of the local quality of life, scapegoating them for existing ills and amplifying an already fraught environment. This is the final ingredient in the cocktail of precursors to conflict within the receiving areas. (See Table 10)

Table 10. Variables and Outcomes in Displacement Case Studies

	Host Communities		
Lenses/Factors	Dust Bowl (“Okies” in California)	Katrina (Louisiana Evacuees in Texas)	Wildfires (Northern California Locals)
(1) WHO: Demographic Distinctions	Regional, political, socioeconomic	Regional, racial, socioeconomic	<i>n/a</i>
(2) WHAT: Inherent (Resource/Safety) Drivers of Conflict	Visible poverty, competition for social services, disease, voting rights	Housing eligibility, visible poverty, social services, perceived crime, trauma	Housing availability, petty crime, trauma
(3) HOW: Induced Drivers of Conflict	Media narratives, public officials in receiving areas	Media narratives, public officials in sending area	<i>n/a</i>
Outcomes	Isolation, disenfranchisement, limits on movement, litigation to Supreme Court	Economic hardship (difficulty finding employment and housing), harassment	Homelessness (displaced-in-place)

The outcomes varied widely in terms of the overall severity of the host area’s response, from run-of-the-mill hardship to such extremes as legal disenfranchisement and physical conflict including blockades of new arrivals in ongoing crises. Further, as evidenced by the distinction between the responses to Katrina evacuees in Baton Rouge and Houston, and to Dust Bowlers in urban and rural areas, individual host communities may have different experiences after the same disaster event.

While it may be tempting to assume that the chronological order of these events implies a lessening of risk of conflict over time, this is an improper conclusion to draw. Both the *end-of-history illusion* (that society has progressed uniformly to reach its current state of sophistication) and the *normalcy bias* (that people will underestimate the possible novel effects of a disaster) are logical errors that should be guarded against. Numerous disasters similar in scale to these recent wildfires occurred well before the devastation of Hurricane Katrina; recent patterns in disaster occurrence open the possibility to an even more destructive event yet to happen. The prospect of future catastrophic events leading to larger-scale population shifts requires thinking at a community and national level about how to understand and plan for these possibilities.

B. THEORETICAL PROPOSAL

The proposal that follows comes in three parts: first, an assertion that *internal displacement* is a distinct perceptual phenomenon within host communities in the United States; second, a Disaster-Displacement Perception Model linking the set of factors that may make a community less sympathetic to displaced people; and finally, a way to identify and intervene in factors most crucial as precursors to outgrouping, stigma, and conflict.

1. Models for Migrant Perception

Returning to the jurisdiction-based migration types presented in Chapter II, this analysis suggests there is room for a third option for how migrants are perceived beyond the immigrant and domestic-migrant schematics. In the “immigrant” model, the receiving community predictably sees international migrants as a foreign outgroup. By contrast, the “domestic mobility” model shows the receiving community normally regarding intra-national migrants as fellow citizens (belonging to the same generalized ingroup), whose freedom of movement around the country is unquestioned.³⁰¹

The “internal displacement” model posits that the involuntary nature of their migration (with the sending community no longer able to support them) means that

³⁰¹ All the same, “in-group” and “out-group” are relative and situational terms. In a given context, regional rivalries may outweigh national unity.

displaced migrants are likely to be regarded more like refugees—as a “foreign” outgroup—than as fellow citizens by their receiving communities. Those migrants that fall into this perception are the most vulnerable, people who lack both economic resources and social connections in their new location. See Figure 12 for a summary conceptualization of the three models.

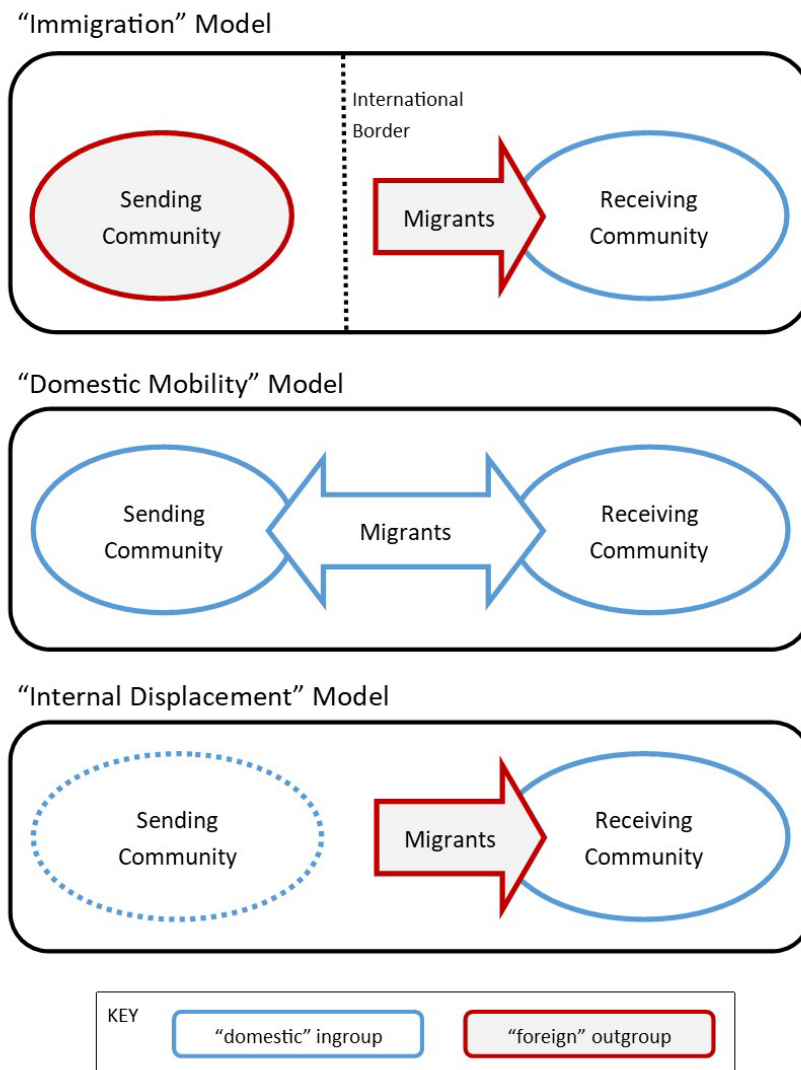


Figure 12. Three Host-Community Perceptions of Migrants

The differences between the latter two perceptions may be the product of both generalized and community-specific tendencies. The nature of the disaster, whom it worst affects, where they go, what challenges already exist there, and how those parties with social influence respond are all factors in which way the community leans.

2. The Disaster-Displacement Model

Based on the preceding analysis, the pathway from event to outcome comprises two main stages: an overall disaster event and a community-specific response. Within those stages, there are four general categories of factors in the disaster-displacement process that influence the ultimate character of the relationship between the displaced and the host community. The first three are color-coded green on Figure 13 to indicate that they are exogenous (uncontrolled) inputs to the overall pathway, given their origin from nature or from collective decisions made prior to the event; the last is color-coded red, representing the presence of deliberate effort to change the tenor of the local-newcomer relationship. Further complicating the relationships between these factors are the other observable elements of the displacement process (the “where,” “who,” and “what” of the situation, in blue) that are each endogenous to the process, being derived from multiple other concerns.

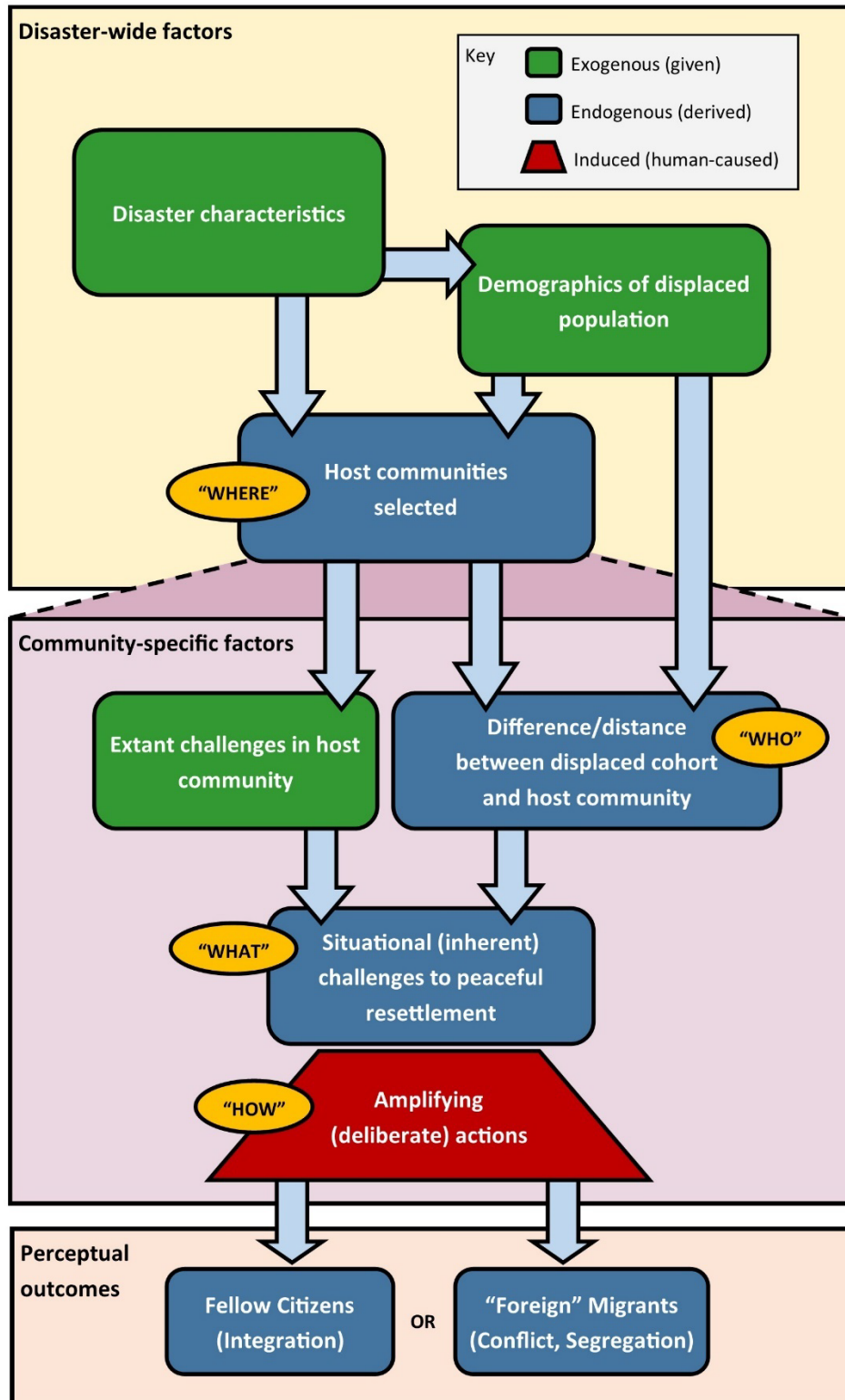


Figure 13. Disaster Displacement Perception Model

The green and red elements are particularly important both in that they set the parameters of the displacement process and that their nature may be anticipated and influenced.

- **Disaster characteristics:** The rapidity of the event onset, the size of its footprint, and the extent of the destruction—how habitable the area will be after the acute danger phase has passed—combine to set the stage for displacement. Will people need to relocate? How far from home? Will they have any agency in the matter?
- **Demographics:** Partly subordinate to the disaster but equally important is who the displaced are, in two senses. First, their characteristics in isolation, for example socioeconomic profile, age distribution, and ethnic or cultural identification. Second, how they differ from their neighbors in each host community, and how clearly the influx may be spotted by locals. Here the development of a social identity distinction, with a clear ingroup and outgroup, may arise. Does the newcomers' demographic profile mark them as identifiably from outside the region?³⁰² Are they arriving at a rate that noticeably changes the profile of the local community?³⁰³
- **Extant local challenges:** The clearest points of contention between locals and newcomers often originate here. A sudden shock to the population may spotlight or exacerbate a standing concern, for example, the exploitation of farm labor (as in rural California during the Dust Bowl), a deficiency in the police force (as in Houston after Katrina), or an affordable housing crisis (as in other host communities after Katrina, or California after the

³⁰² For example, Baton Rouge, although only 80 miles away from New Orleans, was popularly considered culturally distinct from the latter city. Even a minor difference would have been magnified as it took in over 100,000 evacuees, swelling its population by nearly 50 percent overnight. Peter Applebome, "In Baton Rouge, a Tinge of Evacuee Backlash," *The New York Times*, September 7, 2005, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/07/us/nationalspecial/in-baton-rouge-a-tingeof-evacuee-backlash.html>.

³⁰³ "There is also some evidence that what erodes the willingness to redistribute [resources to newcomers] is the rate at which diversity increases rather than simply its level." Collier, *Exodus*, 85.

wildfires). If the resettlement feeds into a large-scale resource competition, health or safety concern, or blemish on the city's reputation, the sociofunctional analysis may be appropriate.³⁰⁴ Does the displaced population fit into a salient local frame for understanding civic issues? Is the local government ungenerous with social welfare benefits, and will the prioritization of helping newcomers feed into resentments felt by others of lower SES?

- **Amplifying actions:** Deliberate campaigns by persuasive actors (civic leaders, media voices, community groups, or others) that may either fuel or dampen the potential for local conflict. This may take the form of a moral panic, a social-media rumor, or a targeted scapegoating of an outgroup like migrants in order to raise one's own political profile. It may take advantage of a widespread moment of anxious uncertainty—for example, economic instability, pandemic illness, or ongoing social upheaval—to focus people's attention on an easy "problem." Conversely, trusted institutions may work to dampen potential conflicts by emphasizing the capacity of the community and their duty to care for vulnerable populations.

Each of these factors has the potential to influence a community toward conflict (exacerbating) or away from it (mitigating) by priming the locals to think of the displaced as either part of their ingroup (domestic migrants) or a "foreign," competitive outgroup. Stage one factors, the characteristics of a disaster and the demographics of the displaced, are in large part morally neutral.³⁰⁵ By contrast, the stage two factors of local issues and amplification reflect the agency and priorities of community leaders. It is in those spaces where more intervention can be brought to bear to quell social problems.

³⁰⁴ By contrast, the arrival of entrepreneurial young workers in a depopulating area can revitalize a community, as the welcoming of international refugees in Rust Belt towns has demonstrated.

³⁰⁵ Neutral in the sense that a disaster could potentially strike anywhere. The higher probability that those of lower SES are more likely to endure a more protracted displacement is a separate moral concern.

3. Exacerbation and Mitigation

In a loose sense, each stage of the model can be conceived of as a balance scale, with the mitigating factors on one side and the exacerbating factors on the other in the receiving community's collective judgment. The accumulated "weight" of exacerbating factors may potentially lead to a more disruptive environment in a host community. A disaster is itself the genesis for a displacement event, for example, *only if* it forces people from their homes; from there, it has the potential to scale up from an inconvenience to a social crisis. The demographics of the displaced are relevant in both an absolute sense—larger numbers of more vulnerable people are a shock to any system—and in the context of a particular community.³⁰⁶ Once a sizeable cohort of evacuees end up somewhere, how well they are received becomes subject to a welter of local considerations: compatriotism or co-identification, pity, and social hospitality norms weigh against the competition for resources, the fear of disease and crime, and the shame of existing local deficiencies when a sudden demographic shift occurs.³⁰⁷

Both mitigating and exacerbating factors can be amplified by intentional framing: media, government, or community positions for or against the presence of these newcomers may add kindling to what would have otherwise been a waning ember. While it may be impossible to predict the eventual outcome of a displacement event in a host community, seeing the preponderance of factors lean one way or the other be reason enough to raise an alarm. (See Table 11.)

³⁰⁶ Vulnerability is distinct from low socioeconomic status in that it can be the product of specific traumatic factors, such as abandonment and housing instability in post-disaster conditions, rather than a general descriptor of material resources.

³⁰⁷ Although this review was designed around events affecting people within their country of residence, it should not be overlooked that appealing to compatriotism (or "fellow citizenship") is a tool that savvy authorities can leverage to reduce ingroup-outgroup hostilities. Conversely, there is a good deal of ambiguity around community perceptions of *marginal citizens*, e.g., Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans "immigrating" to the mainland. See Collier, *Exodus*, 69.

Table 11. Factors Mitigating and Exacerbating Conflict

Factor		Mitigating	Exacerbating
Disaster	Footprint	Small or unpopulated area	Large populated area
	Speed of onset	Slow	Rapid (immediate physical danger)
	Impact / destructiveness	Minimal damage	Housing and infrastructure destroyed
Overall Demographics	Total volume displaced	Fewer people	More people
	Socioeconomic profile	Resource-rich	Resource-poor
	Vulnerability	Personal agency (e.g., being able to choose where to live)	Dependency on public assistance to reestablish livelihood
	Age and family status	Older	Younger, extended families
	Pre-existing concerns	-	Prevalence of communicable disease, presence of criminal organizations
Comparative Demographics	Distance from sending community	Local	Interregional
	Rate of arrival	Slow flow	Rapid entry, overwhelming shelters
	Cultural distinctiveness (Regional / racial / political)	“Invisible” migrant	Visible outgroup
	Primary language and citizenship	Similar to domestic majority	Distinct from majority
Extant issues	External conditions	Relative calm	National crisis scenario
	Known resource constraints	-	Ongoing concern (e.g., housing crisis, high unemployment)
	Unknown constraints	-	Emergent concern (e.g., capacity of health system, deficient tax base)
	Excess capacity	Opportunity to revitalize a foundering community	-
	Insularity	Reputation for welcoming / assistance	Culture of distrust
Amplifying Actions	Media focus	Sympathetic or neutral reporting	Alarmist reporting
	Civic leadership	Welcoming or solutions-focused statements	Divisive rhetoric, threats, activity to block entry
	Community groups	Collaborative efforts	Scapegoating, rumormongering
	Higher levels of government	Transparent assistance	Inaction or perceived favoritism

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

The prospect of understanding and responding to the ongoing internal-displacement risk in the United States does not end here. There are many opportunities to intervene in the sad eventuality of disaster disrupting community patterns. At the most basic level, *next steps* encompass (1) minimizing the prospect for displacements to occur and the impact on both sending and receiving communities, (2) considering the development of a national IDP policy, and (3) undertaking further research.

1. Improve Current Practices

Intervention begins “left of boom,” i.e., before disaster strikes. For climatologically agnostic events like earthquakes, seismic retrofitting and stronger building codes are imperative. For climate-linked events, from wildfires to droughts to hurricanes, the nation must confront and consider both hardening infrastructure and seriously engaging with the causes and consequences of anthropogenic climate change. Areas that are repeatedly battered require planning and pre-positioning of resources to minimize the radius of inhospitable zones; the closer people remain to home, the less fraught the transition.³⁰⁸ The question of when to implement a managed retreat, in which communities permanently evacuate from areas where the costs of repeated or prolonged devastation would be prohibitive, is one that local leaders must face as well. Underlying all these challenges is an overdue reckoning with the fact that vulnerable demographics are often under-resourced and concentrated in neighborhoods closer to environmental hazards.

After a disaster, most of the factors in play are exogenous but there is room for stakeholders to mitigate social fractures. Citizens have the right to enjoy freedom of movement within the nation, but the concentration of newcomers in an unprepared community can itself have negative consequences. States should consider the designation of host communities for prospective disasters, much in the way that large organizations conduct continuity of operations planning by designating backup facilities. Media outlets

³⁰⁸ As explored in the wildfires case study, the exacerbation of an ongoing housing crisis is a tragedy but less bad than the continuation of a crisis scenario augmented by civil unrest.

and civic leaders could develop and share training materials to understand the risks of exacerbating community conflict through careless use of negative frames or unverified rumors in public speech.

2. Develop a U.S. Internal Displacement Policy

The United States has an extraordinary opportunity to redefine security within the developed world. Among the OECD nations, only Mexico and Turkey have thus far adopted laws or policies specifically addressing IDP matters.³⁰⁹ Middle-income countries as diverse as Colombia, Ukraine, Kenya, and Indonesia are tackling IDP issues through both law and policy approaches.³¹⁰ As the rich-world nation most frequently confronted with mass displacement events, the U.S. perspective on how to care for its citizens in times of crisis would be the authoritative standard for other aspiring humanitarian superpowers to emulate.

This transformation would require moving past a view of recovery that treats the U.S. government's involvement as something akin to an insurance fund for damaged property toward a recognition of the need for active remediation to bridge the socioeconomic losses from disaster.³¹¹ The federal government brings a coordinating capability and gravitas to its mandates that cannot be duplicated by voluntary and local organizations; the latter, while nimble, do not have nearly the same overall reach.³¹² The

³⁰⁹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Regulatory Frameworks on Internal Displacement: Global, Regional and National Developments* (Geneva: Global Protection Cluster, 2016), <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/regulatory-frameworks-internal-displacement-global-regional-and-national-developments>.

³¹⁰ Global Protection Cluster, "Global Database on IDP Laws and Policies," accessed February 23, 2020, <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/global-database-on-idp-laws-and-policies/>.

³¹¹ At present, the centerpiece of federal recovery coordination is FEMA, which in the words of former Administrator Craig Fugate is focused on assisting middle-class homeowners to rebuild and is "not a safety net." Danny Vinik, "'People Just Give up': Low-Income Hurricane Victims Slam Federal Relief Programs," *Politico*, May 29, 2018, <https://politi.co/2kvLXTy>.

³¹² "Local resources and case management, no matter how skillfully executed and coordinated, cannot replace the substantial federal commitment needed" to support displaced groups. Holly Bell, "Case Management with Displaced Survivors of Hurricane Katrina: A Case Study of One Host Community," *Journal of Social Service Research* 34, no. 3 (October 11, 2008): 25.

promulgation of an internal displacement policy would be an acknowledgement that this nation is not invincible but it does have solutions in hand for the inevitable, strengthening our overall homeland security posture.

3. Further Research

This thesis used a strictly qualitative approach to holistically describing the relationships between migrants and host communities. The topic comes with a number of moving parts for which there is already a rich literature: climate patterns, urban development, emergency management and recovery, social relations, economic well-being, civic institutions, constitutional rights, and migration studies. While the thrust of this particular effort was to attempt to integrate the research to date under a holistic framework, there are broad opportunities to investigate, validate, and refine the proposed relationships via further quantitative study. Is there a way to measure “social citizenship”? What, for example, are the policy implications of referring to fellow citizens as “refugees”? How can adequate protection be granted to displaced persons without incurring resentments among their impoverished neighbors? What are the potential “tipping points” for a community’s resources to be overwhelmed by new arrivals?

One striking feature of the research considered thus far is the often-contrary pressures exerted by local, state, and federal governments. For example, California community leaders criticized the federal New Deal for aiding the movement of indigent people into the state. Further, identification or affiliation to local/state citizenship versus national citizenship is a likely determinant of how willing host communities are to receive their fellow nationals from other regions. Deeper exploration of the various roles and pressures of the federal system can go in many directions. How feasible is a time-limited Reconstruction Agency like the one Japan chartered to consolidate long-term recovery after the Fukushima Triple Disaster?³¹³ Is it desirable to designate safe-harbor cities ahead of time, in the event of a catastrophe requiring government assistance with resettlement?

³¹³ See “Efforts for Reconstruction of Tohoku,” Reconstruction Agency, accessed March 5, 2020, <http://www.reconstruction.go.jp/english/>.

D. FINAL THOUGHT

What separates the United States from the struggles of the developing world is not any immutable characteristic. The resources it leveraged to become wealthy, from fertile soils to a robust stream of hardworking immigrants to an insulating distance from the world's other major military powers, had to be painstakingly converted into the infrastructure, both physical and social, that are now taken as given. The lesson of previous great powers—Egypt, Rome, the Inca and Mongol empires—is that past success does not ensure future survival. The same destabilizing forces that wrack poorer nations can also disrupt or erode even the strongest institutions.

There is a broad opportunity here to prepare for and plan to mitigate that erosion, so the physical losses from unavoidable events are not compounded by a social devolution in the rights and security of the American people. The hardships that arise from environmental disaster, which can strike in nearly any corner of the country, will have effects rippling to areas far from the immediate blow. The greatest risk to follow from such events is an overreaction pitting locals against outsiders and the development of an overtly means-tested citizenship under which only the well-off can thrive.

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